

Guru Nanak Commemorative Lectures 1973-77

SIKH GURUS AND THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL THOUGHT

edited by
TARAN SINGH



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**SIKHISM : ITS UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO
HUMAN CIVILIZATION**

delivered by
DR GOPAL SINGH

INTRODUCTION

Sikh Gurus and the Indian Spiritual Thought is a collection of Guru Nanak Commemorative Lectures, delivered annually under the auspices of the Department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala. The present volume covers the lectures delivered between 1973-1979.

The authors of the lectures belong to various Indian religious traditions. Their scholarship is evident from the wide expanse of their canvas. The diverse perspectives will enable the reader to view the history and philosophy of Sikhism from different possible standpoints. But this adds to the difficulties of the Editor who may undertake to present a synthesised view of such widely different points of view.

(Late) Dr Taran Singh had conceived the idea of the present volume. The entire credit for the work is due to him. He was an erudite personality of great standing in the domain of writing on religion. The present work is now being presented to the readers after his sad and sudden demise in 1981. The department has lost in him an able scholar and a very devout person. Every one who knew him has been engulfed by a sense of vacuum. Unfortunately, the Editor's introduction was not completed by Dr Taran Singh because of his sudden and untimely passing away from amidst us. I had sought to undertake this work on my first assumption of office as the Head of the Department. But I could not complete the work due to various reasons including the brief interlude during which I ceased to be the Head of the Department.

We have now decided to present the work without an elaborate introduction, although we had felt the need for commenting upon various views expressed in the lectures of different scholars. We seek to do the same briefly by observing that the 'insider' view of Sikhism may not necessarily agree with the various arguments and views presented in the

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papers of various scholars. We do not say this to detract anything from the great scholarly merit of their perspectives. We have made the above comment only to underscore the possibility of difference of opinion in respect of the interpretation of the Sikh doctrine, and events relating to the development of the Sikh tradition.

We are grateful to Dr Bhagat Singh, Vice-Chancellor, for his very kindly agreeing to write the foreword to this book. We owe a lot to his kind interest and support in the publication of this work. I must express my gratitude to the academic and office staff of the Department for their very kind co-operation and help in making the publication of this book a reality.

My very special thanks are due to Sardar Balkar Singh who has been associated very closely with the editing of this book. The great pains undertaken by him may find compensation in being associated with the work of the great scholar, Dr Taran Singh, to whose memory we dedicate this book.

Department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies,
Punjabi University,
Patiala

AVTAR SINGH
Professor and Head

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Publisher's Note

This is a collection of Guru Nanak Commemorative Lectures, which were delivered by Dr Gopal Singh, Dr Ganda Singh, Sardar Kapur Singh, Shri Nirmal Kumar Jain and Dr R. K. Tripathi on different occasions and from different angles under the auspices of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies Department, Punjabi University, Patiala.

FOREWORD

Man's spiritual quest has been an abiding characteristic of his earthly sojourn. The origin of this search may be hidden in the debris of his long and lost history. But the continuous return of man to his spiritual seeking may, in a way, be seen to emanate from his very inner nature itself. We see that this incessant effort to realize his spiritual being has been carried on by him for a very long span of time and over many a land. All this has added to his vast spiritual heritage.

The contribution of Indian spiritual traditions to man's collective heritage is one of the most significant aspects of its philosophy and theology. In recent years, our Universities, as the new and growing centres of learning, have shown increasing academic interest in promoting research in the areas of religion. The Department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies of the Punjabi University, has made great and very significant contribution in this direction. The present volume, *Sikh Gurus and the Indian Spiritual Thought*, is a collection of lectures delivered by eminent scholars of our country. I am very happy to be associated with the publication of this volume and sincerely hope that it will be one more fruitful addition to the understanding of man's spiritual tradition, and also inspire readers to imbibe in their lives the universal teachings of the seers outlined in this book.

Punjabi University,
Patiala
October 20, 1981

BHAGAT SINGH
Vice-Chancellor

Lecture I

SIKHISM : ITS UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN CIVILIZATION

I

Sikhism has been defined by most historians—otherwise well-meaning and scholarly, though casual in their treatment of this faith—as an offshoot of the Bhakti movement, the Hindu mystic renaissance of the middle ages, emphasising the oneness of God and man's direct emotional relationship with His Personal or Absolute Reality, irrespective of caste or creed. But, as we shall see, the scriptural authority the Bhaktas built their thesis upon was the Veda (or more particularly Vedanta), and the loving adoration (Bhakti) of God was to be offered to any one of the incarnations of Vishnu, both of which doctrines Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, repudiated. There are other fundamental differences also like the Bhakta emphasis on renunciation, contempt for women, spiritual indifference to, not total repudiation of, caste as a social force and non-involvement with a dynamic, purposive life, in all of which Nanak took a different and more earth-aware course.

Others, even more superficial, have looked upon this movement as a synthesis of the fundamentals (whatever the term might imply) of Hindu Bhakti and Muslim Sufi-ism. If anything, Nanak's basic inspiration was indigenous, even pre-Aryan, and he, as we shall see, either rejected or wholly gave a different meaning to the basic concepts and doctrines of both Hinduism and Islam. "My God is neither in the Veda nor in the Semitic texts, for He is beyond both, being a Living Presence."

Still others, more recent, though most casual and ignorant both of the Sikh Scriptures and the original historical records, have interpreted Sikhism as a kind of Punjabi nationalism which lies to-day in shambles before our very eyes. Incidentally, Nanak (nor any other of the Sikh Gurus) ever so much has mentioned the word "Panjab" in his extensive writings. Though born in the Panjab, his tours took him not only to the entire sub-continent of India but also to Ceylon, Tibet and the Middle East. Certainly he wasn't out to propagate "Panjabi nationalism" there. But, even statesmen of great vision like Mahatma Gandhi and literary geniuses like Rabindra Nath Tagore have seen in the evolution of the Sikh movement from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh a degeneration of the world of the spirit (of which Nanak was such a superb expression) into the cult of the sword in the hands of the tenth and the last Guru. Tagore, however, wrote his thesis before he witnessed the horrors of the two world wars in the present century, and Gandhiji lived to repudiate his own thesis of "non-violence in all circumstances" by blessing the defence of Kashmir through armed resistance, and the "brave and selfless" resistance of the Poles to Hitler's onslaught in 1939 as "non-violent" being offered in self-defence.¹ As we shall see, it is to the eternal glory of the Sikh movement that the sword was drawn only when all other means had been exhausted, and under the leadership of the Gurus, always in self-defence. Victories were won, but its fruits were never claimed in the form of territory or reparations. And even

1. See on Poland "Non-violence in Peace and War", by M.K. Gandhi (p. 240-Navjivan Publishing House): On Kashmir, *ibid*, Vol. II (pp. 321, 363). Almost every Gandhite of note in India, led by the noble Sarvodaya leader, Jaya Parkash Narayan and the spiritual heir of Mahatama Gandhi, Shri Vinoba Bhave, cried out for armed help to the forces of liberation in East Bengal in 1971, when neither appeal to the conscience of the world nor to the conscience of their persecutors was of any avail. Ultimately, what led to the freedom of Bangladesh was the resort to a clash of arms, when all the choices were closed upon India.

when a sovereign empire was created, its fruits were shared equally with all and religion was separated from the affairs of the State.²

No notice, however, need be taken of those who have termed Sikhism as a Hindu challenge to the growing might of Islam, both political and military, during the Moghal period, as the Gurus at no time accepted this as one of their social or religious aims. On the contrary, Muslims fought along with the Hindus as the collaborators of the Sikhs throughout history for the ideals their Gurus cherished and proclaimed. And those eminent historians like Sir J. N. Sarkar who see

2. Ashoka's renunciation of war after the bloody battle of Kalinga is cited often enough to emphasise India's faith in non-violence since time immemorial. This is, however, historically not true, though India has seen, as Mr Nehru rightly points out in his "Discovery of India" for longer period peace and her wars have been far more humane, (as Dr. Basham points out in his "The Wonder That Was India") than in other parts of the world in the corresponding periods and even upto the present times. But, the supreme Rig Vedic god Indra, is a warrior-god; so also are Shiva and his consort, Kali or Chandi, so also are the heroes of Mahabharata and Ramayana worshipped through the ages as the incarnations of Vishnu. Indeed, except for the Buddha, who learnt all the arts of war (being a Kashatriya Prince) but never practised them, all the other nine incarnations of Vishnu (including the one, Kalki, who is yet to appear to destroy evil) are involved in a gigantic war or bitter struggle against injustice and oppression. As for Ashoka, the following opinion by a genuine lover of India's ancient past, Dr. A. L. Basham, may be of interest to the reader :

"It is clear that Ashoka was not a complete pacifist. The wild tribesmen of hill and forest were a constant source of danger to the more settled parts of the empire...Ashoka clearly tried to civilise them, but it is quite evident that he was ready to repress them by force if they continued their raids. He made no mention of reducing the army. Despite his remorse at the conquest of Kalinga, he was too much of a realist to restore it to its original rulers. For all his humanitarianism he maintained the death penalty, which was abolished by some later Indian Kings . . . Though Buddhist tradition records that he abolished judicial torture, this is not clearly stated in his edicts." (The Wonder That Was India, p. 54-55).

nothing unique or original in this movement and dismiss it as a casual aberration on the historical process are better left unanswered. From the fruit only can one judge the quality of the seed. And, in the present as much as in the past, the significant Sikh contribution (inspite of their small number) to the integrity, the polity and the economy of the Indian sub-continent and the religious idea of the world is there for anyone to see.

However, at times a historian (not necessarily a Sikh) with a perceptive vision has risen to point to the basic uniqueness of the Sikh movement. One such was Qazi Noor Mohammed, a bitter enemy of the Sikh creed, who in his eye-witness account of the Sikh struggle against the Moghals of the eighteenth century, in his *Jangnama*, has paid tribute to the Sikh ideals such as only a man of far-seeing and catholic mind alone could do. Another distinguished name is that of Joseph D. Cunningham (1812-1851), the author of "A History of the Sikhs" (1848), who was an eye-witness to the first Anglo-Sikh war. Still another was the well-known philosopher-poet of the present century, Dr. Sir Mohd. Iqbal, the dream-builder of Pakistan.³ And mention must also be made of the Emperor Jehangir, the persecutor of the fifth Guru, Arjun, who also though unexpectedly, understood the basic significance of the Sikh movement and hence tried to destroy it as soon as possible.

Qazi Noor Mohammed accompanied Ahmad Shah Abdali in his invasion of India in 1764. This is what he has to say about the Sikhs who fought bitterly against his master :

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3. Here, it must be said to the credit of Iqbal's vision that in his address to the Lahore session of the All India Muslim League in 1930, he enunciated the conception of Pakistan (though he did not give it that name) as consisting only of Panjab, Sind, the Pathanland, Baluchistan and Kashmir. The idea of a second, eastern, wing (or East Bengal) was an imposition of Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah in the Muslim League session of 1940, though he too visualised two "sovereign, independent and autonomous entities" of the two wings, which they have now become, thus defeating the forced union between the two wings solely on the basis of Islam.

"Do not call Sikhs 'dogs' (*sag*) because they are brave like lions on the battlefield. If you want to learn the art of war, then learn from them on the field of battle ... When engaged in giving charities, they surpass even Hatim. When they take the sword in hand, they gallop from Hind to the country of Sind and nobody, however, strong and substantial, can dare oppose them. The body of each of them looks like a mountain and in grandeur excels fifty men".

"If their troops take to flight, do not consider it a defeat. It is a trick of their mode of war. May God forbid the repetition of such a fraud. They resort to such deception in order to make the angry enemy grow bold and to run in their pursuit. When they find them (the pursuers) separated from their main body and cut off from all help and reinforcement, they at once turn back and give them the hardest time possible".

What is, however, more significant is the following observation of his, which, according to him, distinguishes the Sikh warrior from the usual run :

"In one thing they excel all other warriors. They never kill a coward and do not obstruct one who flees from the field. They do not rob a woman of her gold, may she be a queen or a slave-girl. Adultery does not exist among these 'dogs'. None of them is a thief."⁴

Not only this, but, as we shall see later on, not one of

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4. In "*Manu Simiriti*" such a code is also enunciated : "A warrior fighting from a chariot might not strike one on foot; an enemy in flight, wounded or asking quarter might not be slain; the lives of enemy soldiers who had lost their weapons were to be respected; poisoned weapons were not to be used. Homage and not annexation was the rightful fruit of victory." But, as Dr. Basham has pointed out (*The Wonder that was India*, p. 126), this code "was not always kept." ... "The heroes of Mahabharata infringed them many times, even at the behest of their mentor, Krishna, and the infringements are explained and pardoned by recourse to causistical arguments of expediency and necessity. The rules of war could only be maintained strictly by a King certain of victory or certain of defeat." In the later and more popular *Arthshastra* of Kautilya, however, we hear nothing of these rules.

the wars that the Sikhs or their Gurus waged, was to carve an independent territory *for themselves*, nor did they impose their way of life upon any other through force or fraud. Their small numbers (they are 10 million in India according to the Census of 1971 and about 2 million abroad) are due not merely to the strict discipline, moral and spiritual, they are enjoined upon to observe, but also because proselytisation has never been pursued by them even in the hey-days of their empire. In fact, till lately, seekers for initiation into their fold were normally discouraged from joining their ranks unless a man attained maturity of thought to adopt the Sikh way of life which meant the dedication of all one had—body, mind and riches—to the cause of the Guru. It was like walking on the razor's edge.

Joseph D. Cunningham was a rare and perhaps the first European, who, in spite of many mistakes of fact he commits in delineating the life of the Sikh Gurus (though his account of the first Anglo-Sikh war is the most authoritative), had grasped the fundamentals of the Sikh faith, not as a mere movement of reform or an offshoot of Bhakti, but as something more cataclysmic :

"It has been usual to regard the Sikhs as essentially Hindu, and they doubtless are so in language and everyday customs, for Gobind did not fetter his disciples with political systems or codes of municipal laws; yet in religious faith and worldly aspirations, they are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by an object unknown elsewhere. But the misapprehension need not surprise the public nor condemn our scholars, when it is remembered that the learned of Greece and Rome misunderstood the spirit of those humble men who obtained a new life by baptism. Tacitus and Suetonius regarded the early Christians as a mere Jewish sect; they failed to perceive the fundamental difference, and to appreciate the latent energy and real excellence of that doctrine which has added dignity and purity to modern civilization."

He continues : "The last apostle of the Sikhs (Guru Gobind Singh) did not live to see his own ends accomplished,

but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty though fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Gobind saw what was yet vital, and he relumed it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Gobind has not only altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames.⁵ The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look, which marks the fervour of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity."⁶

Emperor Jehangir (1567-1627), who got the fifth Guru Arjun, executed in 1606, had also seen in the Sikh movement something more than a mere movement of religious reform or a novel spiritual adventure. Though he cites the "help" (in the form of a blessing) given by the Guru to his rebel son, Khusrav, as the main cause of the Guru's execution (which excuse as we shall discuss later on, is wholly spurious), he lets himself out on a more fundamental reason in his autobiography "Tuzak-i-Jehangiri", when he writes :

"At Goindwal, on the bank of the river Beas, lived a Hindu, Arjun by name, in the garb of a Pir or Sheikh. *Thus, many innocent Hindus and even foolish Muslims he brought into his fold* who beat the drum noisily of his self-appointed prophethood. He was called Guru. From all sides worshippers came to offer their homage to him and put full trust in his word. For three or four generations, they had warmed up their shop. For a long time I had harboured a wish that I should set aside this 'shop of falsehood' or I

5. This physical change was noticed also by Sir Alexander Burns (Travels, I, 285, and II, 39), by Elphinstone (History of India, II, 564) and it is also lightly struck by Malcolm (Sketch of the Sikhs, p. 129).

6. "A History of the Sikhs", p. 84-85.

should bring him into the fold of Islam." (p. 35).

So that it was not a mere Hindu reformer who was being put to death by an orthodox Muslim emperor, but one whose instruction even "foolish" Musalmans were also accepting (and for which reason his father, Akbar, the Great, the founder of *Din-i-Ilahi*, had come personally to pay homage to the Guru at Goindwal). This is what made Sikhism a "shop of falsehood", for it was being acknowledged by both Hindus and Musalmans. Not for nothing had Guru Nanak raised his unusual slogan : "There is no Hindu, no Musalman", when he entered first upon his divine mission, late in the fifteenth century.

Some influential leaders of Muslim sects, like Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1835-1905 A. D.), head of the Qadiani sect, have tried to establish that Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was a devout Muslim (how else, he argues, could he visit the Mecca, or accept a robe of honour in Baghdad on which is inscribed the entire text of the Quran, and how otherwise would Muslims argue and fight for claiming his dead body, etc.—"Sat Bachan", Urdu, second edition 1902, pp. 4377-4504) while some scholarly Hindu historians, like Indu Bhushan Banerjee, have claimed that Nanak was as a good and devout Hindu as any other Bhakta and that he challenged, and changed, nothing in their way of life, neither caste nor the sacred thread, nor the authority of the Hindu Scriptures, etc. ("Evolution of the Khalsa").

But, a far more perceptive philosopher-poet of India, Dr. Sir Mohd. Iqbal (1876-1938 A. D.) asserts that "when our nation did not heed the illuminating message of Gautam the Buddha and recognised not the worth of this unique jewel of a man, rose Nanak, the complete man, in the Panjab to proclaim the message of *Tauhid* (the oneness of God)."

Iqbal could have added that while the oneness of God was proclaimed by many before Nanak, not so the oneness of man which was the more distinctive contribution of the founder of the Sikh faith. Perhaps, sensing the ample distinction, Iqbal did not attribute Nanak's emergence as a great world-teacher to the influence of Islam, but to a

far older order, that of Gautam the Buddha, who though he did not believe in God as Person or the human soul⁷ partaking of His essence, yet preached the gospel of one man,⁸ not through the language of the gods or his chosen priests, but of common speech, cutting through all intermediaries, the sacred texts, sacrifices and rituals, the myth and the miracle and the interventionist role of the gods and goddesses. That the Hinyana or Theravadin original teaching of the Buddha was accepted less and less (more particularly its emphasis on self-culture—Arhathood—and withdrawal and its teachings directed more to the monks than to laymen), the Mahayana, the great vehicle, or the more numerous order which was accepted by most people in Asia transformed the great Buddha into a God whose compassion could not only be invoked through prayer, worship and meditation, but even more through good works for others—the ideal of Bodhisattva—thus bringing it more and more in line with the Sikh thought. For, no other religion—bar the Christian—emphasises so much the ethical conduct being a necessary adjunct of spiritual life as the Buddhist and the Sikh. As in Buddhism, directives in such minute details⁹ are

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7. It has been suggested that the *Nirgun* (attributeless) God of the Upanishads and the *Shunya* (Void) doctrine of the Buddha are closely inter-linked and that as the Buddha believes in transmigration what is it that transmigrates if not the soul which he describes as sense-impressions.
 8. Though he kept the women by and large out of the monastic order and did not attack caste with the ruthlessness of Nanak and the succeeding Gurus.
 9. See Appendices. Also see the *Vars* and *Kabits* of Bhai Gurdas; *Sikhan di Bhagat Mala* by Bhai Mani Singh; *Rahitnamas* of Bhai Nandlal, Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Chaupa Singh; *Hukamnamas* of Gurus Tegh Bahadur and Gobind Singh; *Prem Sumarag : Janam Sakhis* of Mehervan and Bala and of the India Office, London; *Gur-Partap Surya Granth* and *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, etc. Dabistan quotes such fantastic stories about the commission and charitable nature of the Sikhs of the Guru period that though they seem shocking to the common moral code (like the sharing of one's wife) they reveal a people prepared to share their all with the needy even if he were a thief or a thugg.

given in the Sikh Scriptures and the biographies of the Sikh Gurus and their devout followers that the discerning eye of Mohammed Iqbal could not but visualise a closeness between the two faiths, as casual observers would indeed fail to mark. The Middle Path, or the Madhyamik school of Buddhist thought (neither ascetic self-torture, nor excessive self-indulgence) also is a common ground between the two.

Another similarity may also be of interest to the students both of religion and history. Though the Buddha was born on the borders of Eastern India, and for a time—i.e. after a lapse of about three centuries after his death during the reign of Ashoka and for some two centuries afterwards—spread to the whole of India, its original doctrine was soon lost, and with the Buddha being accepted as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu it became a part of the all-absorbing Hindu belief. It was, however, in the North-West of India—the Valley of Gandhar—where, since the beginning of the Christian era, the purity of the doctrine was preserved and preached. It was at the University of Taxila, where scholars and pilgrims came from Afghanistan, China, Tibet, Ceylon, Thailand, Turkistan, Malaysia and Cambodia to drink deep at the fount of the Buddhist doctrine in its true manifestation. The Gandhara School of Art developed here—no doubt under the influence of the Greeks—to take the highly intellectualised message of the Buddha to the common masses through an emotional and aesthetic approach, and prayer and worship and the doctrine of the Bodhisatva, besides meditation, became a part of the great Mahayana sect which did much to propagate the Buddha's message to far off lands, including China and Japan. It must be remembered that it was under Kanishka, the ruler of the North-Western India of the first century A.D., that a great assembly of the world Buddhists was held to bridge the growing cleavage between the various schools of Buddhism, notably between Hinayana and Mahayana.

This is also the land where the Aryans first found their settlements and the Hindus of later days found their name

(derived from "Sindhu" or the inhabitants of the land of Sind and its tributaries), their basic religious doctrines and their civilisation which have stood the test of several millennia. It is here that the Rig Veda, the main corpus of the Brahminic faith, found its first utterance, as also the Bhagavad Gita, which reconciled various modes or moods of attaining to the Supreme. But, strangely enough, though the Buddha calls his religion "Arya Dharma" and was himself an Aryan prince, he derived his main inspiration from the pre-Aryan civilisation, now called the Dravidian, and whose main contributions have been monism as against the Aryan polytheism, secular more than ethereal, spiritual more than metaphysical. And those were also the traits that centuries later, when whatever was left of Buddhism had degenerated into Tantric ritual and the main body was driven out of India to find its home elsewhere and when Hinduism or more specifically Brahminism had become a matter of form rather than inner illumination, and could no longer face the challenge of Islam at the spiritual even more than the physical level that there arose "a complete man" called Nanak, to challenge the Semitic as much as the Aryan view of life.

One of the more significant matters in which Guru Nanak and his successors derived inspiration from their pre-Aryan past was their repudiation of the village-culture propagated by the Aryans, as against the city-civilisation of the Harappa-Mohenjodaro period which the Aryans from Central Asia had uprooted and destroyed. It is in this part of India that most of the Gurus were born and their instructions struck firm roots. Historians have to date taken no notice whatever of this significant fact that no Guru settled down in his ancestral village and more often than not built a new model town for his family and followers to move to and farm or trade in. As we shall see later on, these townships were not founded by the Gurus to escape the wrath or jealousy of their relations, or the relations of their predecessors, as has been suggested by some historians, but to give a new and fuller content to the secular living of their

people. The towns of Kartarpur, Tarn Taran, Khadur, Goindwal, Amritsar, Shri Hargobind pur, Kirat pur, Anandpur, etc., in the Panjab owed their origin and prosperity to the Sikh Gurus. Again, as in the Harappa culture, the growth of the cities founded by them was pre-planned and not haphazard, and stones, bricks and lime instead of mud were used as building material. Not only this, as time passed, the cities were girdled with forts and fortresses (as at Mohenjodaro and Harappa) from the time of the sixth Guru onwards. Why Guru Gobind Singh invokes the supreme God as Shiva and his consort, Chandi, as the destroyer of evil is not accidental. Without any belief in gods and goddesses other than the one God, the Guru is using the pre-Aryan, Dravidian symbols and myths to point out where his main inspiration lay. The Sikh temples rising smoothly in the midst of the sparkling water-tanks, the pilgrim-stations being built not on the banks of the rivers or over the mountains (as the Aryans did) but on the trade-routes, also point to the same conclusion. And Guru Nanak is perhaps the first North Indian to try his hands at the Southern musical notes (ragas).

II

What is the type of the people among whom the Sikh Gurus were born and who were the first to accept wholeheartedly their doctrines both of spiritual regeneration and moral and social hope? As is well-known, the part of Hindustan that the Gurus were born into was first peopled by the Indus Valley iron-walled, city-civilisation of Mohenjodaro and Harappa replaced later by the war-like, nomadic Aryan (lit. noblemen) from Central Asia, by village culture.¹⁰ That the indigenous black aborigines were

10. Comments Prof Basham ("The Wonder That was India", pp. 16-17). "Obviously there were numerous well-to-do families in the Indus cities, which perhaps had a middle-class larger and more important in the social scale than those of the contemporary civilisation of Summer and Egypt" (a tendency that still marks out the Punjab from the rest of the Hindustan peninsula).

defeated in long-term engagements is clear both from the war-like qualities of the Vedic gods, like Indra, and also from the relics and ruins of the civilisation they displaced. The new waves of migrating Aryans also tussled with the older settlers, one clan with another, thus making the people of the North-West both aggressive and tough, the extremes of heat and cold in summer and winter also contributing their own share to the same effect. Alexandar the Great of Macedonia found the resistance to his march into the Punjab (lit. the land of the five rivers, the tributaries of the river Indus or Sind) so over-powering that he had to return, frustrated in his grand design as a world-conqueror. Even a defeated Porus of Western Panjab, when asked by Alexander what kind of treatment he would like to be meted out, his defiant answer was ; "as behoves one King to treat another." The Panjabi men of arms fought in Persia in the armies of King Darius, five centuries before Christ. Horse as a weapon of war as against the elephant which later became India's curse was known to the Panjab even in pre-Aryan times. 'Flaming thunder bolts' were hurled at Alexander by the Panjabi men of arms and it is the opinion of many scholars that gun-powder was invented not in China but in the North-West of India. The cow, so revered in later Hinduism, is nowhere depicted in pre-Aryan seals, though the bull is (and which later became the mount of the god Shiva). Phallic worship (or worship of the creative faculty) was an important element of the Harappa religion, and burial (not cremation) was the usual rite. It was a meeting place of many races, and cotton (as against bark of the trees) was first used by the Harappa people, two to three thousand years before it became current in Europe. Not only several weapons of war like the sword and the axe (employed also for peaceful purposes) were extensively known, but also life here had a gaiety and an abandon which the exclusive Aryan tribes (which exclusiveness was based on colour, profession or time of migration) later frowned upon as they moved further into Indo-Gangetic-plains or the heart of Hindustan. Influenced by long-term peace, the productive earth and an enervating climate, they now

began to speculate more on the other world and the nothingness of life, than the joys and the beauties of here and now. Most scholars are of the opinion that the dark-coloured aborigines of the Indus valley civilisation (now known as Dravidians and mostly inhabiting Southern India), like the Jats of the Panjab, are Scythian in origin and came from Central Asia, whose one branch migrated as far south in Europe as Bulgaria.¹¹

They observed no caste (e. g. in the south, even now there are no Kashatriyas or Vaishas and upto now, among the Panjab aborigines, like Sansis, no ceremony is complete without drinking and dancing. There was no priestly class among them. Upto the time of the Rig Veda (composed mostly in the Panjab), the culture of the pre-Aryans is sought to be assimilated by and large by the immigrants, especially the love of life and its secular joys, but later looked upon for the same reason with scorn.¹² The Panjab, the first home of the Aryans, is now termed "an impure land when Vedic sacrifices are not performed". The magnificent hair-styles of women on Mohenjodaro seals, the urbane living standards, the building of structures for the convenience of the citizens rather than the temples for gods and palaces and tombs for kings as in contemporary Egypt, besides other factors narrated above, reveal that it was a predominantly secular civilisation, "advanced and singularly uniform, closely akin, but in some respects even superior to that of contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt." "Their public baths, municipal Government and drainage system are still the marvel of the Sumerian civilisation of that period,"

11. The language of Gypsies in Bulgaria is very similar to the language of the hilly areas of the Punjab, and their traditional customs, folk-tunes and costumes resemble those of the hilly areas of the Punjab, now called Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir.
12. "They called them *Palikas*, i.e. 'excluded', and *Vratyas* or heretics. Their women, said they, wandered through the streets and fields adorned with garlands, intoxicated and undraped. With cries like the neighing of horses, they run to the bathing places." (History of the Punjab, S.M. Datif, p. 34).

writes Jawaharlal Nehru, "and their manufactures reached even the markets on the Tigris and Euphrates. Trade was not confined to raw materials and luxury articles, fish, regularly imported from the Arabian sea coasts augmented the food supplies of Mohenjodaro.¹³ "Nothing", says Sir John Marshall, "that we know of in other countries at this period bears any resemblance, in point of style, to the faience models of rams, dogs and other animals, or to the intaglio engravings on the seals, the best of which notably the humped, short-horned bulls are distinguished by a breadth of treatment and a feeling for a line and plastic from that have rarely been surpassed in glyptic art, nor would it be possible, until the classic age of Greece, to match the exquisitely supple modelling of the two human statuettes from Harappa."

All that was beautiful or useful—and even dreadful (for it will plight the enemy)—became sacred for the sensitive people of the Panjab, and fine jewellery, with semi-precious stones set in gold filigree, has been unearthed from the ruins of Taxila. A vigorous school of sculpture developed here—the Gandhara school of Art as result of the inter action of the Indians of the various races like the Greeks, Chinese, pre-Muslim Turks, the Iranians, the Scythians upon each other. These fiercely independent people were governed neither by the King nor the priest, but by their duly-chosen representatives. The idea of kingship is Aryan in origin and is of later growth. The worship of images and idols in the post-Budha period is a Greek influence ('but', as the idol is called in Hindustani, itself is a derivative of 'Budha'), and Purdah among women was introduced by the far later Muslim conquest. Nowhere were the women honoured so much as in the Aryan and the pre-Aryan civilisation. "She is the light of the dwelling" She makes her own choice of the husband and gaily-dressed women with their hair in four knots are coveted. Even the Aryan gods live in the snowy coolth of the Himalayas or beyond. They dig canals for irrigation and sow corn, beans, barley and sesame. They know the use of medicinal herbs, of weaving

13. Discovery of India, p. 70

and spinning and also make fine leather-goods. They have among them smiths, carpenters, carriage-makers, ship-builders, goldsmiths and other artisans.

Says Arrian, the Greek historian of Alexander's campaign in the Panjab, "no nation is fonder of singing and dancing than the Indian" (meaning thereby, as is obvious, the people of the Panjab). Except for domestic servants, slavery was unknown here as it was in Greece or Rome. North India (or North-Western to be precise) was famous for her weapons of war, especially for her quality of steel, her swords and daggers. When Alexander invaded Persia, it is started by Firdausi in his "*Shahnamah*" that swords and other weapons were hurriedly sent for by the Persians from India. This is not all. The University of Taxila, which was the capital seat of the North-Western province of Asoka's empire, became first for the Brahmins and later for the Budhists a foremost seat of higher learning in the whole of Asia, not only in the arts and religion, but more especially in science and medicine. The grammarian Panini, the author of the "Yoga Sutra" Patanjali, the physician Chanakya, to name only a few world-renowned masters, were all the product of the University of Taxila. The study of astrology and astronomy was pursued here as much as the study of pure mathematics, algebra and geometry. As Jawaharlal Nehru puts it, "Banaras has been centre of learning and even in Budha's days it was old and known as such, but Banaras does not appear to have been at any time anything like a University such as existed then and later in other parts of India. There were numerous groups there, consisting of a teacher and his disciples and often between rival groups there was fierce debate and argument. But in the north-west, there was an ancient and famous university at Takshashila or Taxila...noted for science, especially medicine, and the arts and to which travelled sons of nobles and Brahmins, unattended and unarmed, to be educated. Probably students came also from Central Asia and Afghanistan. It was considered an honour to be a graduate of Taxila... Physicians who had studied there were highly thought of and it is related that whenever Budha felt unwell, his admirers

brought to him a famous physician who had graduated from Taxila.”¹⁴

Thus, neither the pre-Aryans nor the early Aryans of the Rig Vedic period discarded the secular in preference to the spiritual. It was the Budha, who attacked the concepts of God and the soul, so majestically expressed in the Upanishads, and the gods and goddesses of the Rig Veda identified with the forces of nature (both good and beautiful, or terrible, but by far more the former than the latter), priesthood and sacrifice, the desires of the flesh and emphasising renunciation (“for all life is pain”) and non-injury to living beings, and who for a thousand years after his demise continued to influence the thought and history of Hindustan. He also attacked caste¹⁵ at least in the monastic order, if not generally. It is no marvel, however, that it was uprooted from the soil of its birth and struck its roots in other countries like China, Korea, Japan, more as Mahayana (a modified form of Hinduism or Brahminism) than in its original doctrine of Hinayana, whose self-negating philosophy made it unpopular for the people of India, given with such abandon to the joy and beauty of life, to music and dance, sculpture and painting, urbane living and believing in life not only on the earth, but in the life everlasting. The rise of neo-Hinduism under Shankara with his doctrines of Maya and attributeless (Niguna) God who was indeed identified with the individual

14. Discovery of India, p. 117.

15. Comments S. M. Latif, the noted Muslim historian of the Panjab, in his “A History of the Panjab” (p.45); “The caste system is only technically bad. It may be said to be morally bad if it created hatred and abhorrence of one another. But, generally speaking, it has not that effect in India. The distinction observed by the ancient Romans between patrician and plebeian was essentially a caste distinction. The hereditary distribution of employments among the ancient Egyptians bore a close analogy to caste. Everybody in Europe, everybody in Persia and Arabia sets up his separate table. Persons of a certain standing in society ordinarily marry only among people of position equal to their own. Only the Hindus have carried their system too far, (but) caste, properly speaking, is not peculiar to India.”

soul accepted, by and large, the main thesis of the Budha. Coupled with this, was the need of medieval India to arm itself and fight the invading marauders as much as local adventurers. Both these factors gave a death-blow to the existence of Buddhism in India.¹⁶

However, as it has been already pointed out, the brief interludes of foreign attacks by the Egyptians, the Persians, the Scythians or the Tartars, followed by Alexander, the Greek, made the Panjab not only the battle-ground but also opened its civilisation to European and Central Asian influences, and to trade and commerce, and the mixing of blood. But when the foreign hordes were finally expelled, we come to certain well-known names of history, whose fortune is connected virtually with the Panjab. Apart from the heroes of the war of Mahabharata, which was fought at Kurukshetra to the south-east of the Panjab, we come across such remarkable figures as Chandragupta Maurya, his grandson Asoka, Governor of Taxila, before becoming emperor in the third century B.C., Kanishka, with his headquarters at Peshawar, Chandra Gupta (who, driven from Patliputra, took refuge in the Panjab and helped by Panjabi men of arms became a great empire-builder in the fourth century A.D), till the Huns almost shook the Gupta empire, and the rival dynasties within India through their internecine warfare opened the door for her conquest by the forces of Islam.

The invasions of the Muslims which started with the seventeen-year old Mohammad-bin-Kasim, an Arab general, in 711 A.D., was not meant to be a war of conquest however, but a limited engagement to rescue an Arab vessel detained at the mouth of the Indus by a Hindu Prince, Dahu, but the initial success attending upon Kasim and the enormous booty he received as a result, emboldened him to bring the whole of Sind, including Multan, under his sway, though only for a very short period for Kasim was killed and sewn in raw hide under the orders of his master (on account of the suspi-

16. It is interesting to note that Latif finds Buddhism "distasteful to the lively and imaginative people of India" who discarded it for reasons of 'good' wholesome life (A History of the Panjab. p. 49).

cion sown in his mind about Kasim's character by the two beautiful daughters of the conquered Hindu Prince who had been offered by Kasim to his master for his harem). Over two centuries later (977 A.D.), when Jaipal ruled in the Panjab, Sabuktagin, a slave of Turkish extraction, assuming sovereign authority at Ghazni, attacked the Panjab but met with little territorial success, and returned with a large booty though leaving a few mosques behind. However, his heart was inflamed with thoughts of revenge for he believed to have been tricked into a withdrawal by Jaipal whom he considered he had shown magnanimity. He returned again, defeated Jaipal and annexed the western part of the Indus, exacting a heavy price for his victory. On his death, his thirty-year old son Mahmud, made it a habit to invade India for loot, his thirteenth invasion being in 1027, only three years before his death at the age of sixty-three. Acknowledged by the entire Muslim world as its chief, and apart from the staggering booty in gold and jewels he acquired in India, his sway extended from Kashmir to Ispahan and from the Caspian Sea to the Ganges. The Indian part of the Ghaznavi empire lasted for over two centuries among the descendants of Mahmud, though bitter fights raged frequently entailing large massacre of men and destruction and looting of property, as the throne of Ghazni, changed hands or the local Hindu rajas raised their rebellious heads at frequent intervals. For the first time during this period, large scale conversions of non-Muslims through force became the hall-mark of the onslaughts, besides the destruction and desecration of their temples and the carrying away of Hindu women and children as slaves.

It is not worthwhile to dwell in any detail on those succeeding to the throne of Ghazni, like Muhammad Ghori, who was assassinated in the Panjab; Kutab-ud-din-Aibik, the first Muslim king to be crowned at Lahore, and who later occupied Delhi and commemorated its conquest by the erection of the huge, smooth tapering Qutab-Minar in red stone on which were inscribed the verses from the Holy Quran—a marvel still of architectural daring, beauty and design. He was followed by the slave-dynasty brought

about both by merit and marriage into the royal household, though during this period Delhi became the chief centre of learning and the resort of holymen, including Farid-ud-Din, Ganj-i-Shakar of the Panjab (whose work is included in the Sikh Scripture) and his disciple Khwaja Qutab-ud-din Bakhtair Kaki, and others. Ghazni was now more an appendage of Delhi than vice-versa. Once the Panjab had fallen, as it did finally in 1001 A.D., the way was now open for the conquerors from the North-West, to bring the entire of North and East India, if not also substantial parts of the South, under their sway.

For a time, Persian became the language of the court and the elite, and a new hybrid language, built on *Khari boli* or the dialect of the country around Delhi and Mathura, but with a liberal admixture of Persian and Arabic vocabulary started being evolved. The Sufi orders of Islam, accepting much of Hindu thought and practice, did much to popularise Islam, especially among the lower and untouchable classes of the Hindus. Meantime, Chengiz Khan, the Mongol pagan (1221-22), his grandson Halaku, and various other descendants of Chengiz invaded the Panjab, one after another, late in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century A.D., but were defeated. It was, however, one of the descendants of Chengiz's son-in-law, Khalij Khan, who becoming a convert to Islam and settling down with a large number of families in the mountainous west of the Panjab (where their progeny still remains) rose in the favour of the Ghazni kings, usurped the throne of Delhi, and founded the dynasty of the Khaljis. They were followed by the Tughlaks, their founder Ghias-ud-Din taking his name from his father, a Turkish slave of India's slave-king, Balban. They halted the attacks of the Mongols (or Moghals) and even attacked them in their own country. The invasion of Timur or Tamarlane of Samarkand, also of Mongol blood, in 1398 A.D., however, brought about their downfall, accompanied by savage butcher plunder and devastation, the worst sufferers again being the people of the Panjab, notably at Tulamba, Dipalpur and Bhatner. The whole districts of Multan and Lahore were totally ravaged.

Delhi especially was deluged in blood. All prisoners of war, numbering a hundred thousand, were put to the sword. Hindu women were outraged in large numbers by Timur's soldiery and the city of Delhi set upon fire. Soon, however, he was on his way back home, though he committed much pillage and wholesale slaughter on the way, compelling many people, including the Raja of Jammu, to embrace Islam.

The Tughlaks, who built an empire as extensive as that of Asoka, including parts of the South, were followed by the imbecile Sayyads (1414—50 A.D.) from whom the throne was captured by the Lodhis under Bahlol (1451-88 A.D.), Governor of the Panjab, whose ancestors were from a commercial Afghan tribe and who won, through both personal chivalry and intrigue, the throne of Delhi, the titular King adopting him as his son. He was, however, a mild and just Prince, treating his courtiers as his friends and seldom mounted the throne "in order to avoid display of authority". In his early days, he was even fond of visiting the *darveshes* and claimed his throne being the blessings of one of them. His son, Sikandar Lodhi (1488-1517), from a Hindu wife, was also a man of literary and religious disposition and distributed alms to the needy Muslims every Friday, though, being a bigot, he demolished many Hindu temples of historic import, as at Mathura, and raised mosques on their ruins, considering this as an act of piety. He prohibited the Hindus bathing at the sacred river-banks (ghats). The shaving of beards and heads by the Hindus at the pilgrim-stations was forbidden, and a Brahmin of Bengal who had declared Islam and Hinduism, both, to be true religions, was beheaded on his refusal to accept Islam. Otherwise, he was "a good and capable ruler" and cared deeply for the welfare of his subjects, taking personal pains in the matter of prices, weights and measures, and charities to the poor. He never changed an established custom and deprived no one of his *Jagir*. Ibrahim Lodhi (1517-1526), his son, who succeeded him, imprisoned his own brother and later put him to death. He was an extremely cruel and a vicious man and created many enemies among the Afghan nobles, including Daulat Khan

Lodhi, the Governor of the Panjab (of whom we shall have to speak much later on). His uncle, Ala-ud-Din, fled to Kabul and collecting a body of 40,000 horse attacked him, joined by Daulat Khan. Though defeated in the war, Ala-ud-Din escaped to the Panjab and egged on by him, Daulat Khan sent his agents to Kabul to urge Babur, the Moghal ruler there, and a great-grandson of Timur, to invade India, whose throne after three or four partial attempts, he finally won in 1526, and established the Moghal dynasty which lasted over three hundred years and seven generations.

Nanak (1469-1538 A.D.) was contemporary of the Lodhi dynasty, and of Babur, whose descendants, as we shall see, had much to do with the house of Nanak, and who with very few exceptions and for a brief period of history kept themselves on the best of terms with the Sikh Gurus for a period extending to about two centuries (the last Sikh Guru breathed his last in 1708 A.D.).

Here we must pause to deliberate upon the socio-political conditions of the age which witnessed also the birth of Nanak, the Guru, as to how far they affected his life and message and also vice-versa.

Much has been written about the Muslim violence and tyranny, the bigotry, the forced wholesale conversions of the subject peoples, the destruction of Hindu temples and total denigration of their religion and age-old customs and beliefs, the imposition of *Jezia*, a discriminatory religious tax, the denial to them of public service, and the dishonouring and carrying away as slaves of Hindu women and the imposition of purdah on the rest, etc., etc.¹⁷ But, much should not be read into this wholesale condemnation of the conquering faith of Islam. It must be noted that in the medieval ages wars in Europe, even between the Christians of various denominations, were far more violent. It may be true that during the

17. For details see : Sri Ram Sharma's "The Crescent in India" and "The Religious policy of the Moghals"; also "The History and Culture of the Indian People", Volumes 6 and 7 (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan).

Hindu period of Indian history or whatever is known of it, from the rule of Asoka (he came to the throne in 273 B.C.) to the death of Harsha (647 A.D.), the wars were more humane and the various religions—Brahminism, Buddhism, Jainism, Tantricism or animism—as much as the various races, Aryan and Dravidian, Scythian and Mongolian, Greek and Persian, all co-existed side by side in comparative peace or coalesced with each other, unobtrusively, as time passed. But, instances are not unknown in which bloodshed, cunning and intrigue, wholesale conversions, destruction of each other's temples, and looting and burning of property and carrying away of women as the war-booty or dishonouring them were the order of the day.

Aryans destroyed not only the well-built walled cities but uprooted wholesale the culture of the pre-Aryan Dravidians, through war and violence, and treated the aboriginies as second-class citizens, if not pariahs, as references to them in the Rig Veda amply testify. Later, Aryans clashed with each other, and the wily intrigues of a woman, Kaikei, at the court of Ayudhya which led to the banishment of Sri Rama, the noble rightful heir to the throne, abduction of his wife, Sita, and the resultant war with the utter rout of Ravana, a Brahmin king, through the defection of his own brother, Bibhishana, as much as the superior, death-dealing arms of Sri Rama's forces have so impressed our race that upto date we do not cease to re-create the bloody drama with all its attendant violence and vileness. The war of Mahabharat is even a more classic example of brother shedding the blood of brother and reckless killings, the dishonouring of the enemy's womenfolk, including Draupadi, who was stripped naked in the open court of Dusasna, and the practice of various deceptions forbidden by religion but sanctified by expediency. Reference has already been made to the terrible carnage in the war of Kalinga waged by the noble Asoka, "in which 1,50,000 persons were carried away captive, 1,00,000 were slain on the battlefield and many times that number died". The last of the powerful Hindu kings, Harsha (died 647 A.D.), according to the Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan

Tsang (or Yuan Chwang) "went from east to west subduing all who were not obedient. His elephants were not unharnessed nor the soldiers unhelmeted." He kept a force of 60,000 elephants, 1,00,000 cavalry and 50,000 infantry and except for the Panjab, subjugated the whole of upper India, not excluding Bihar and a large part of Bengal.

When the Muslims appeared finally on the soil of India, at least for three centuries in the beginning (900 A.D. to 1200 A.D.), the Hindu India, divided into caste and clan, was fighting grim battles, one with the other, and not unoften siding with the invader than with each other to contain the foreign onslaughts.

It was a Hindu general, who fought along, with Mir Kasim against his own King. The Jats of Sind, governed ruthlessly by a Brahmin usurper at this time, refused to be on the ruler's side. The story of Jaichand of Kanauj (who extended his dominion from Kanauj to Bihar) siding with Ala-ud-Din Khilji against Prithiraj Chauhan of Delhi due to a family feud is well-known, though what is less known is his invasion of the territory of Chandels and the defeat of their king, Paramardi. According to Kalhana's *Rajtarangni* "Harsha (a ruler of Kashmir from 1089 to 1109 A.D.) displayed in his chequered life a strange combination of cruelty and kindheartedness, liberality and greed, violent selfwilledness and reckless supineness, cunning and want of thought". King Sankaravarnan of Kashmir (883-902 A.D.) made himself notorious by his extortionist greed, oppressive taxation and temple looting. The great and wise King Bhoja of Malwa (1010-1065 A.D.) "carried on incessant warfare with all the surrounding (Hindu) kingdoms-Chedi, Lata and Karnata. While Bhima I, King of Gujrat invaded Singh, Bhoja attacked Gujarat. He, in turn, was attacked by Southern Chalukya King, Someshwara II. Mulraja of Gujrat became a great ruler by attacking Cutch, Kathiawar and Ajmer. For long years, a three-cornered struggle began between the Gurjars, the Palas of Gujrat and the Rashtra Katas of the Deccan for the overlordship of North India. The Cholas, the Pandayas and the Cheras in

the South repeated this performance. How could any composite culture or a soulful religion flourish in such a state of affairs ?

No wonder, the Muslims soon filled this vacuum in an atmosphere of cultural decadence, internecine warfare and religious confusion. But once the Muslim power settled itself in the throne of Delhi, it is one Muslim race fighting against another of their own faith, Turk against the Arab, Afghan against the Turk, Persian against the Mongol, Pathan against Pathan, Sunni against Shia and the Hindus were only incidentally involved. Initially, there was bound to be large-scale tyranny, loot, bloodshed and discrimination, but once the throne of Hindustan was assured to a Muslim dynasty, it is the Sufis who propagated the cult of Islam (which did not negate higher Hinduism, and indeed assimilated many local customs and beliefs), and not the fire and the sword¹⁸. Individual marauders and sectarian monarchs cannot be picked upon to make out a general case against the recklessness of Islam as such. The Islam that came to India, or took root in its soil, was only a name and a form. The content, to all intents and purposes, had been Indianised (if not Hindu-ised) which used persuasion rather than coercion upon the subjects to join a society more egalitarian than their own. Were it not so, the Hindus would not be a majority people to this day after a thousand years of Muslim rule. What saved them was not their resistance (for, they actively collaborated with the state apparatus after a time, for long years *as Hindus*), but the Islamic society itself had become, as time passed, permissive and the rulers, though nominally Muslim, became interested more in the safety and splendour of their dominions and good and easy life of the court than spreading the exclusive gospel of Islam in return for a promised heaven in the Hereafter. Music and dance, drinking bouts and orges, paintings of the court's splendour and of intimate lovelore, erotic poetry (much of which under the guise of mystic symbols also challenged the exclusive doctrines of Islam), harems and howries, self-aggrandisement and palace intrigue, the deification of the

18. For details See : Dr Tara Chand's "Influence of Islam on India"

King as *Zil-e-ilahi* and the denigration of the *ulema* became the rule rather than the exception. It may all have been against the orthodox precept of the prophet Mohammad and the practice of his caliphs, but who cared? Life in the here and now was more precious and its rewards more immediate than the pledges to be redeemed in the after-life. For both sides, therefore, the game was not worth playing, and the prize had lost all its original glitter and glory. The hardy desert-man and the mountain-warrior had now tasted civilisation.

As will be seen later, though Nanak's contemporary Afghan King, Ibrahim Lodhi, was reckless, and thus invited the wrath of his own nobles and a successful Moghal invasion not so, by and large, the contemporary kings of Nanak's birth and youth—Bahlol and Sikandar Lodhi. Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi, Governor of Panjab, in fact became a near-disciple of Nanak, all of whose early companions, including the village-chief Rai Bular and Bhai Mardana, his life-long companion, were Muslims. His Persian teacher : Qutab-ud-Din, revered him as guru. Not for nothing did he visit the Mecca and other stations of Muslim pilgrimage as he did in respect of the Hindus, unharmed and unmolested. And, as we have said above, most of the Moghal kings were on the best of terms with the house of Nanak.

What is it, then, that made Nanak a prophet and a seer in the eyes of both Hindus and Muslims. If it be some kind of a synthesis between the two creeds that he is claimed to have attempted, then Kabir and a host of his near-contemporaries, like Tukaram, Chandidas, Ravidas, etc., had certainly preceded Nanak in preaching the gospel of the one God (which doctrine, it is stressed by many, was under the influence of Islam, as if the concept was not known to the Hindus for at least two millennia before the birth of Prophet Mohammad), castelessness, and the cult of Bhakti (loving adoration of God), etc. The Muslim Sufis were stressing the same ideals no less. And, though the basic doctrines of Nanak's faith were essentially Hindu—the belief in *Karma*, transmigration and *Nirvana* or *Moksha* being the end of all

life-activity, as we shall see, he wholly transformed the meaning of these concepts. And yet he was accepted as guru by the Hindu no less than the Muslim. He did the same in respect of almost every basic doctrine of Islam, including that of *Tauhid*. Whosoever compares with some seriousness and studies the spiritual discipline propounded by Nanak and the one propagated by the Sufis would find more to differentiate than to obviate all distinctions between the two. To take only one instance, Nanak's five *Khands* (as enunciated in his composition, the *Japji*) and the Sufis, seven stages of spiritual evolution have practically very little in common.

The basis of the uniqueness of his message lies, therefore, not in the synthesis of the two 'warring' creeds, but in giving a new depth and dimension to the basic concepts of both, while denouncing their outer manifestations in each case. To take only a few examples: while both Hindus and Muslims stressed the concept of one God, it was Nanak who proclaimed the concept also of one man; while to the Muslim Sufi, as much as to the Hindu Vedantist, only a particular path alone could lead to man's salvation, according to Nanak, all paths that led to the same goal were sanctified and worthy of man's highest attention. According to both, the final revelation had either been made by God through the Veda or the Quran, according to Nanak, God revealed himself from age to age, and though the Truth did not change, its interpretations and media did, according to the demands of the times. The world did not come into being in a single atomic explosion nor could its age be finally determined, but it evolved from one stage to another, through aeons of years. "God first created the air, from the air came water and from water throbbed the three worlds into being, including the world of man." "God does not shower His gifts on the chosen races and men, but on all men at all times." "He has put into the world whatever He had to once for all." "It is man who has to search out, analyse and made compounds of God's elements, exploit them and distribute them in equity and in good faith." It is not God,

therefore, who is to be blamed for our misery, but man. God is to be praised for having blessed us with all that we would ever need and with a mind for its wholesome exploitation and equitable distribution, and a soul to dispel the ego as much as individuals as of societies and nations, and to find eternal repose, or integration of the Personality, thus rising above the limitations of time.

"There are myriads upon myriads of universes," says Nanak, "and the suns and the moons, the spheres and the stars, the worlds and the underworlds" — and "their count cannot be made by the Qazis, nor the utterers of the Puranas". "Heaven is not only in the Hereafter but also here" — so is hell. *Moksha* or redemption (or illumination) can also be attained here — by man with an integrated mind. Life is transitory, and all-too brief, and the ideal is to merge one's time-sense with the Timeless, but it is not by denying or renouncing life that the ideal can be attained, but by grappling with it, in all its fury and fantasy, not for oneself, but for others, and, what is even more important, in the name and for the sake of the ideal that is God. For, man's world is the battle-ground of God and it is to express and justify His existence, His Moral Law, His Compassion as much as His retribution that he created the earth, and in it the man whose destiny is not to identify himself with the animal, but with the spiritual within him and within the universe, if also not beyond. He who flouts God's Moral Law finds God —and man—arrayed against him in a myriad ways. Only man has the possibility to evolve into a superman, the angel, not Nietshze's ideal to overpower others, but to overpower oneself, endowed as he is with a mind and soul. Hence the life of man—and equally of woman—is sacred, and neither originates in sin, nor waits till the doomsday for a Day of judgement upon his chosen Prophet to bestow upon him a life of Eternal Bliss, or to burn ever thereafter in the Fires of Hell. To avenge in the way of God is not killing the opponent—(the *infidel* or the *Malechha*) but by converting him to his own essential self. And not by gathering goods but gathering God that one can find rest for the soul, not by

building empires but by building hearts. All rituals and institutions—and all taboos of dress and diet and social behaviour—divorced from the life of the spirit are false and can please not God, nor bring quietude to the soul, only the inner illumination and the compassion of the heart can. God is not in the Books—sacred or profane. He is a realisation, not through belief in a particular dogma, but through experience of His all-pervading Presence and Grace at all times, everywhere. His word too is echoed through the universe and in man's soul—age after age.

How vast was the conception of Nanak, therefore, in respect as much of man, his universe, as of God and His revelation, and how much different from the current coin, can be seen here, in howsoever brief a manner. But, of this, more later. Suffice it to say that Nanak's spiritual—and social ideas—contradict not a whit either the discoveries of Science or the newly propounded economic theories (for, according to him, God reveals himself through man and nature in a myriad ways, each of His facets—good as well as bad—being a wonder), nor does he hand himself over, body and soul, to the merely material. The material indeed is the expression of the spiritual, as the spiritual is the justification for the material. And not by miracles is the spiritual in man or god to be judged. For, every facet of life is miraculous, every particle of nature, all laws of the universe (how uniform, never arbitrary, governed timelessly, by never-changing rule of law). Every other miracle is a trick of the muscle or the psyche, and is not worthy of a serious man's attention. The only miracle Nanak claimed for himself, therefore, was that he would teach man not how to overcome others, but how to overpower himself. And, Nanak did not believe in a sectarian state, based on geography, race, language or a particular religion. He believed in a universal man and a universal state, both man and universe being the creation (or expression) of a universal soul. If he denounced the kings as butchers and the courtiers as the running dogs he was denouncing absolute reckless personal power as such for all times, and not in a particular age including his own. It is only in this context that Nanak's

uniqueness can be ascertained and certified. His greatness lies not in his followers creating a secular empire in the North-West, two hundred and fifty years after his demise, and the successful military challenge they offered to the later Moghals¹⁹ (thus turning the tide of invasions from the West to the East after a lapse of a thousand years and the throne of Kabul, for long years the arbiter of India's destiny, exchanging hands at the mercy of the Sikh monarch at Lahore), but to the ideal of the one man and one God that he preached, of the living man and the living God. Not that his followers fought and won, but how cleanly they fought and for what purpose they won ? It is Nanak as an original, idealistic thinker that should claim the attention of history, not the conquests or the material achievements of his race.

Before we conclude this lecture, it is but meet that we enunciate the Sikh view of history. Lately, attempts have been made by some "Sikh agnostics" on the one hand and non-Sikh secular historians on the other to separate the Nanak of history from Nanak, the "founder" of a world faith, and thus a man also of legend, myth and miracle. And, though the latter attempt has been lauded by ignorant even among the Sikhs as being in conformity with the spirit of modern, scientific age, it has served more to confuse than to illuminate Sikh history. For, the Sikh Gurus have always claimed that though they were born in time, the message they had come

19. The much-esteemed Dr Arnold Toynbee in "A Historian's approach to religion", like Gandhiji and Tagore before him, while bemoaning the transformation of the Sikhs from a peaceable community into a war like sect yet ascribes the political success of the Sikh-Khalsa to having "fought the Moghal ascendancy with its own weapons" (A Study of History, Oxford, Abridgement p. 745) a precedent which, according to him, the All Union Communist Party also employed to its advantage under Lenin. But the distinction between the Sikh ideal of war and the other empire or idea builders as stated above, have always to be taken into account if we are to do justice to their entire history and not merely lean upon casual or ill-assorted episodes to read in it a meaning not intended by its makers.

to declare was eternal and had come from God. "I know not how to utter, for all that I deliver unto you is the command of God", says Nanak. Nanak never claimed that he was either the first or the last Guru, Prophet or the Messiah. The Guru, according to him, was God, the Eternal, who always was and will always be. His word also, therefore, was heard by and communicated to mankind, age after age, by prophets and seers and will continue to be so done, though the essential core will remain the same as ever. The Sikh theory thus gives both a continuity to history as well as a uniqueness at given periods, when history ceases to move except in a narrow, selfish, status-quoist grooves, devoid of purpose and meaning, when a man of spiritual vision and moral daring rises on the scene and history pulsates with a dynamism unknown before.

The Sikh view of history, therefore is that devoid of meaning (a meaning, that is, which corresponds to the purpose of God in creation as enunciated, in eternal terms, by the Gurus), history is a sordid record of man's brutalisation of his inner self, tyranny and bloodshed, exploitation and war. Instead of movement, it is the stultification of all that is ennobling and eternal in man. Man, the individual as much as part of the social whole, is the primary test of history's worth. Nanak and his followers thus can be studied as part of history only as its redeemers and not as its victims.

Understood thus, it is easy enough to dismiss out of account, without impairing the faith of a Sikh any event, no matter how significant in secular terms, which measures not up to his standard of judgement. Defeat, for instance, in the causes of God, if crowned by martyrdom, becomes glorious and success attained at the expense of God's moral law becomes repugnant to the Sikh mind. That God intervenes in the affairs of the world on the side of those who fight, detachedly, for its secular welfare and moral health is a miracle of human history in which the Sikh has firm faith. But that miracles in the form of happenings in defiance of God's natural and eternal laws, should determine a man's spiritual prowess of God-awareness if denounced vehemently by the

Sikh Gurus as the work of mountebanks and charlatans. That devout chroniclers have associated miracles with the Gurus and the mass of people believe in them as an act of faith cannot lead us to conclude either, that such "blind faith" is born out of ignorance and superstition (let alone men of every religious faith, even the Marxists dogmatically "believe" in the ultimate victory of their idea and any experimentation with or improvement upon the "original doctrine" is considered a sacrilege, a heresy and deviation), or that once we separate the Nanak (or his successors) of flesh and blood from the Nanak of faith and prophecy, we shall have a true glimpse of Sikh history. For, Nanak can lay claim, unlike Babur, his kingly contemporary, to history, as understood by the Sikhs, only if he continues to move men's minds and souls (and for this reason remains an object of worship and prayer) throughout history, rather than at a given moment and thus becomes a mere sporadic event in the relentless march of time. Nanak must remain the conquerer of time in order to claim out allegiance, and not as a push-button of history.

Unlike Islam, Sikhism did not start with a political success, but like Christianity, as a protestor against it and a martyr at its hands, but when, ultimately, there was no choice left but to fight the Moghal imperialism with its own weapons and create an empire, no one's social norms or spiritual beliefs were tempered with. The Sikhs chose to remain a minority people, fighting not against but on behalf of the majority, and sharing political and military power with the others even on a more generous scale than they would have even under their own dominion. Whether it was Banda Singh Bahadur or Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of the Panjab, who led them to political victory and national self-assurance, the personal conduct of each one of them was made a subject of public scrutiny and if it did not accord with the Guru's mandate, it was publicly censured and even punished.²⁰ For, to the Sikh, though earthly prosperity

20. Banda was disowned by the Sikhs, by and large, for his assuming the airs of a Guru and flouting several other commandments of the tenth Master in the midst of a life-and-death struggle (though some recent historians, like Dr. Ganda Singh do not corroborate this

is sacred, not so at the expense of the moral health of the individual or the state, and those alone are fit to lead and rule who willingly submit themselves to the rules of good conduct as enunciated by the Gurus. Everyone else may be forgiven, but not the ruler of men. He must answer — and pay—for his deeds (and misdeeds). This is what has made the leadership of the Sikhs, whether spiritual or political, such a hazardous and tortuous task. No one can remain at the pinnacle for long. Time and again, it has made the Sikhs leaderless, or a victim of intriguing gangsters or ignorant maglomaniaacs, or sly sycophants of the powers that be, but their days have always been numbered. But, let it be also recorded that Sikh history not only demolishes reputations, it also builds them as speedily.

And this brings us to another vital point. The Sikhs do not build their peoplehood, like the Christians, or the Arab or the Iranian Muslims or even the Hindus either on the basis of religion in its widest possible sense. That is how, it is the Saint, the Martyr and the man of compassion who has always elicited their soulful allegiance and not the man of power, or self-centred affluence.²¹ The means for any acquisitions are more important than the ends. This trait

thesis). So was Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh empire in the entire North West in India, censored publicly for laxity of private morals, by the then custodian of the Akal Takht, Akali Phoola Singh, who as a general, also fought Victoriously in many of Ranjit Singh's fiercest battles and even laid down his life in one of them.

21. It would come as a surprise to many that to date the most sensitively (not irrationally) religious minded class among the Sikhs is the one engaged in the armed services (to which the Sikhs, inspite of their being two per cent in the population of India, contribute about thirty per cent). Those engaged on the farmland and civil occupations are formal, by and large in their allegiance to the faith, but in the army, it is the mystical and the universal, the ideal of detached service and total surrender to the ideal that is looked for in religion, not the dogmatic exclusiveness, nor the misuse of religion to gain riches or personal power. This alone accounts for their exemplary discipline and detachment in the midst of both victory and defeat.

in the Sikh character nurtured for two centuries by Gurus, and employed as a measuring rod even thereafter has led also to some unfortunate consequences. Firstly, that time and again it has tied down Sikh political life to the Sikh temples and their custodians (no matter who or how they attained their authority over them) and secondly, it has kept out of the political arena some of the best and more sensitive minds of the community who have refused to be subjected to the vicious orthodoxy of the ignorant which was more often employed to keep the saner rivals out than to promote the ideals of the faith. The Gurus never intended-or propagated such a self-stultifying view of the Sikh way of life as has, in recent times, been the community's misfortune to witness²²

However, this trait has given the Sikhs an edge over the other communities as well, though in another not wholly unexpected way, which is generally passed over by the historians. As their religion is bound not to any particular

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22. However, this point should not be laboured too much, as it is more an aberration on the life-current of the Sikhs than a permanent feature of their life. True that even after the demise of the tenth and the last Guru, Gobind Singh (1708 A. D.), the community for a time took its inspiration, from the Gurdwaras, when they were fighting their life-and death battle, as under Banda Singh (1710-1716 A.D.), and during the Misal period immediately there after (upto 1800 A.D. the year of Ranjit Singh's rise to power). The latter after acquiring his kingdom, however, very wisely separated the church from politics (which is not the same as separating religion from politics) and instead of the Gurmattas (edicts) being issued from the holy Akal Takht, at Amritsar, a cabinet decision was instituted by him instead, and accepted without demur by the Sikhs at large. Moreover, the Sikhs have never, except during the periods of stress, accorded to their historic places a superstitious sanctity which would make totems of them. An arid desert-place, now called Damdama Sahib, was blessed by the tenth Guru as Guru's Kashi (the holiest of Hindu pilgrim stations).

The wars of the Cross that figured in history for the possession of Jerusalem by the Muslims and the Christians alike have never been thought of for Nanakana Sahib, the birth-place of the founder of Sikhism, which is now in the territorial and political jurisdiction of Pakistan, though managed nominally by the Sikhs, while several other historical shrines have been allowed to decay or to remain closed both in India and Pakistan.

geography, culture (in a limited sense), race or caste, they are easy to spread out and integrate themselves with other societies the world over. Believing as they do in the Universal state and the universal man (and it is their religion that teaches them this), they have been and may well again be the spearheads of many progressive movements the world over. As we shall see, early in the present century the freedom movement of India took its roots in the most dedicated (even violent) form in some of the Sikh temples (as in California, Vancouver, Malaya and Hong Kong) that the Sikh colonists had established abroad. The Gurdwara Reform Movement of the 1920's merged itself entirely with the non-violent struggle for freedom led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. So did the Kooka Movement, though in a limited way, immediately after the revolt of 1857 had been crushed.²³ Even the Communist Party of India have often

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23. The Kookas (or the Namdhari Sikhs) under Baba Ram Singh their pious founder, have laid exaggerated claims for being the initiators of the freedom movement in the country. True that Baba Ram Singh, once a soldier in the Sikh army, became the spearhead of a movement of spiritual regeneration among the Sikhs after their defeat and loss of empire in 1847 at the hands of the British. It is also a fact of history that under the inspiration of the revered Baba, his followers refused to have any truck with the English education and the British founded institutions including the law courts, the railway trains and the Post Office, etc. They even boycotted the tap-water being allegedly polluted with the animal skin which allegedly lined the metal tubes. The Namdharis also wore the home-spun cloth long before Gandhiji initiated the movement of *Swadeshi*. Forty-Six Kookas were blown from the mouth of the canon at Malerkotla and Baba Ram Singh himself was deported to Rangoon where he died in incarceration. But his deportation and arrest or the martyrdom of the 46 Kookas were concerned primarily with the murder of a few Muslim butchers, and not with the freedom movement by any chance. Baba Ram Singh's preference for the rosary as against the sword, his emphasis on vegetarianism, his revival of various Hindu rituals and customs, like *havan* and *Yajnas*, etc., and his followers' strict observance of an exclusive kitchen for their own sect, as in the case of the Brahmins, were repugnant equally to the doctrines of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The boycott of English education and such useful

enough participated on behalf of their official nominees, in the Gurdwara elections, and departure from or denunciation of the Sikh injunctions even in the matter of form by their membership has been officially frowned upon .

Time and again, the community was almost wiped out either physically or economically (the last being in 1947 at the time of India's partition) in the middle of almost every century, during the last half a millennium, and yet it rose again from its ashes, reinforced in its belief in the never-dying laws of God and the Guru. For, just as the Sikhs look to the past to be inspired by its martyrdoms, suffered for eternal values (and not for secular profit or dominions), they look forward to the future, to give as meaningful direction to history and not to become the unwilling victims of its even living and dying process. This is why not prose but poetry is the language of both their philosophy and history.

institutions as the law-courts, the post office, the railway train and-tap water made the Kookas a revivalist rather than progressive movement, even though later the Kookas under Gandhiji's leadership suffered much, along with other Sikhs, for the cause of the country's freedom. The Kookas leadership's refusal to help Dalip Singh, youngest deposed son of Ranjit Singh, to regain his throne because he had allegedly "eaten the cow" (even though by then he had entered the Sikh fold after the initiation) also reveals the revivalist nature of the Kooka movement.

Lecture II

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF INDIA AS DEPICTED IN THE ADI GRANTH

No historian of the Sikhs has cared to cull out of the voluminous Sikh Scripture, **THE ADI GRANTH**, the socio-political conditions of the middle ages in India in full measure. Of course, these are not gathered in any single chapter of the Granth but have to be garnered through careful and laborious research from the idioms, metaphors and similes pertaining to such conditions. But this is a source-material whose authenticity has never been challenged, and yet no historian to date has gathered this in a complete form, both to reveal the social ideals of the Sikh Gurus as well as to pinpoint the social conditions of their age. Occasionally, there is a direct reference to such conditions, as, for instance, in the poetry of Guru Nanak where he denounces with extreme passion the cruelty, the bigotry and the extortionist ways of the kings and their courtiers :

“The Kali age is the knife; kings are butchers, and righteousness has taken wings.

Where can one find the moon of Truth in this dark night of falsehood ?”

(Adi Granth, Majh Ki Var, p. 170)

Nanak calls kings ‘tigers’ and their courtiers ‘running dogs’, “Who wake people out of their beds”. “King’s servants tear their nails into the bodies of the subjects and suck their blood.” “The Qazis who sit in the courts to minister justice, rosary in hand and the name of *Khuda* on their lips, commit injustice if their palm is not greased. And if someone

challenges them, they quote the scriptures." "Greed is the King and Sin the courtier, Falsehood is their honoured official, Lust is their assistant. And lo, they all assemble each day to confer on the matters of State." (Asa Var, M. 1). Of course, these references are not to the Kings as Muslims, but as Kings and as for courtiers, muqadams and sikdars, they belong to both denominations, Hindus as much as Muslims.

The Society is divided into the extremely rich and gruellingly poor. "The rich enjoy themselves to the full, drunk with their youth and beauty. Their beds are soft; they wear silks; their tresses are smoothed behind their ears. Proud in their minds, they ride elephants, with golden canopies over their heads. And their harems are full of choice beauties."¹

The revenue officials (*Patwaris*) in the village with whom the peasantry had to come into direct contact, every day, "sting like snakes." "The officials of the state are great deceptors. They trap even their own mothers, fathers and friends."

The *Chaudhries* (headmen) of the village are also corrupt and tyrannous, and "they report on and get their kinsmen bound down." "The officials are like the hawks and deer, who are out to trap their own caste." "The subjects are blind and pay willing obedience like the dead" (Asa Var, M-1). "The wise ones dance and make music, and deck themselves like players on the stage to please the crowd." (ibid) "They call each other *Mian* (title of Muslim nobles) and speak the tongue of the foreigner." (Basant, M. 1). "The temple-gods have been taxed, and even "God wears the Muslim blue" (Var Asa, M. 1). "The *Khatris* have abandoned their religion and hold fast the tongue of the *Malechhas*" (ibid), "People are not averse to the eating of meat over which has been breathed the foreign tongue." (ibid).

"Greed is like the dark prison-house ; uprightness is like the fetters on one's feet. Money-gathering is like being

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1. The ideal state, according to Guru Arjun is when one has neither less, nor more. "He who has less is full of care ; he who has more also wanders in the mind (due to fear of loss or craving for more). But blessed is he who has neither less nor more (than he needs)".

constantly hammered. Sin is like the overpowering *Kotwal*." (Basant Astapadis, M. 1).

Slavery is also rampant though it is not dehumanised, and a slave on account of his ungrudging loyalty to master is quoted approvingly. The slaves are bought and sold; and a stamp is burnt into their forehead to indicate to whom they are obligated in debt or otherwise. "How fortunate am I that God has bought me over for a price, like a slave. My wages are the Guru's Word and I do whatever I'm bidden to" (Maru M. 1). "My father is a slave (of God), so also my mother. I'm the offspring of slaves. My mother dances and my father sings and in their company I too sing the praises of my King" (Idid). "I'm the slave of my Guru, and lo, he has inscribed his insignia on my forehead, for I have to pay off a great debt to him" (Gauri M. 4). "He who obeys his master, gets double wages : he who doesn't get a beating of shoes." (Asa Var M. 1). Who will honour the poor in such a society ? "No one looks upon the poor with favour. The man of poverty may try as hard as he would, but the rich look not towards him. If the poor one goes to the rich, the rich man turns his back upon him."

The poor wander from place to place. "The calves, the poor, the slaves and the wayfarers are separated from their kins even in the rains, when the snakes, the deer, the fish and the bride in bed with her spouse are in utter joy." The rich are drunk with pride and power." He who has ten maunds of grain and four *takkās* in his purse, he walks not straight. He is puffed up that he has an estate of a hundred villages or is endowed with a Jagir of two lakh *takkas*." Nanak calls the rich, "blind and deaf and confused in mind." The accountant of the *Yama* (Angel of death) is compared (and not justly) to the extortionist village *bania*, when he comes to ask of the debt or the account and faces him with his debts. "The debtor is pressed as the sesame seeds are in the oil-press." "Friendship with a moneylender (*Kirār*) is false, and leads only falsehood." "He who has turned his face upon God gathers debts like poison."

The villages are, therefore, depleted of their men-folk at

regular intervals, though not on account of political upheavals, but due to extortionist *baniyas*, taxes and tax-gatherers : "O father I shall bide not in this village, for the *Kayatha*, (*Kayastha* or *Bania*) like my conscious mind, makes demands upon me every hour "*ghari*" (Maru, Kabir). And when the balance becomes unbearable, the five peasants desert their farm, and lo, their master, like the soul, is bound down." (Ibid).

The Hindu society is divided rigidly into four castes. But certain startling revelations are made about the private, lechrous lives of the Brahmins. "The dancing girl sings in the home of the Brahmin." (Namdeva, Todi) "They who wear the sacred thread have sharp knives in their hands." (Asa Var M.1). "He marries off the daughter of his client with due ceremony only if he gets his wages. And so also when he shows the path to the devotees " (Ibid). "His mind is blind but he calls himself the wise one" (Ibid) "The speech of the Brahmin is in Sanskrit, of the Sudra in *Prakrit* (or, the people's tongue)" (Ibid). "He wraps round himself a *dhoti* of three and a half yards and he has three bands to his sacred thread. But, call him not the Saint of God; he is but a thug of Banaras." (Asa Kabir). Was Banaras well-known centre of the thugs in the days of Kabir ? "He (Namdeva) was driven out of the temple for they called him an untouchable (sudra). "That is why, in the words of Kabir, "though the world is like a house of wood on fire, it is the wise Pandits who'd be consumed by it, while the innocents will be saved." (Shalokas of Kabir).

In the hierarchy of castes, the sweepers (*chuhras*) and *chandals* are considered to be the lowest. Those who compete with them in this honour are dogs and thugs. The drummer and the drummer-woman (*doomani*), is comparable only to the butcher. The greatest transformation that a devotee of God can hope to attain in the human life is "to be transformed from a sweepress to a Brahmin woman !" (Asa M.5).

Not only are the sudras denied the reading (or even the hearing) of the Hindu Scriptures, but even women are denied this privilege. They are innocent playthings of man, fit only

for a hunt by man, the eternal hunter. "They are to keep their faces covered even before their spouses, and burn themselves alive when their husbands die." The imagery of a devoted, unquestioning, mute and humble woman of sweet speech, her breath sweetened with the chewing of the betel-leaf and five nuts, of utter beauty, decked with sixteen kinds of embellishments, who is redeemed only if her spouse is pleased with her (he may yet be displeased even after all her efforts, for his love, like God's is *his* prerogative—he may deny this to a seeming lover and enjoy another woman's bed not so wise and clever and beauteous and ostentations), is employed extensively in the Adi Granth to denote the human spirit in love with the eternal spouse of us all, our God. "One wife, one man" applies only to the woman and not to the man who may enjoy whomsoever he chooses if he has the means and the capacity to. A widower will certainly re-marry, but the widow never. "She will wear black, keep her hair dishevelled, appear not in public or on auspicious occasion even before the family like the one whom her husband has deserted."

An acceptable bride must have "sons as her offspring, should be of unblemished character, of fine chiselled features, white of colour, robed in red, of eyes like a deer's or the lotus flower, expert in many fine arts, from a good, large and prosperous family, obedient, ever content ("even if she is starved or served unbuttered bread and has the hard ground to sleep on"), an expert cook, stitcher, handicrafter and spinner at the spinning wheel, a watchful supervisor of the household, who should accommodate every wish of the joint family." For a virgin, or for one whose spouse is abroad, all decorations are a taboo. A woman, though necessary for every household, is yet an expendable commodity. Daughters are considered inauspicious and even murdered at birth or if found in illicit relationship.

The curse and the oppression of the joint family, however, finds expression through the ever-suffering bride: "My mother-in-law is my enemy, my father-in-law is garrulous. My husband's elder brother (*Jeth*) burns me at every step."

(Var Ramkali, M 5) "How cursed is my mother-in-law who permits me not even to meet with my spouse." (Asa M. 1) "How happy I am that my spouse has separated me from my mother-in-law's house, and his brother and their wives are as dead to me. Now no longer I'll suffer their tyranny." (Asa M. 5).

As the arts—like dancing, music, etc. were tied down to religious ritual, those who performed them did so merely to amuse the crowds and collect coins rather than express their inmost selves through them. To dramatise the lives of Rama and Krishna, through *lilas* and *Rasas*, for popular amusement seems to be common at the hands of folk dancers and performers who are not held in high esteem. The theatre-houses are not other than the temple-halls, or the courts of the Kings. But, open-air improvised theatre is the most common. The players deck themselves with many kinds of fine dresses and headgears, paint their arms and faces, and to amuse the crowd even throw dust in their heads and roll in the dust, or strike their heads against the hard ground (see Asa Var, M. 1). Kabir has compared God with a painter (*chitrakar*) (Gujri M. 5). The houses of the rich are painted with many kinds of motifs from the *outside* (Suhi M. 1) (a typical Indian habit for outer exhibitionism and inner loneliness). Namdeva has compared heaven to an Art gallery (Malhar).

There are various kinds of ritualistic practices indulged in to trap the unwary. "Some keep their eyes closed and hold their nose (i.e. breath)." "Others live in silence, deck themselves with leaves or wander about naked." "Some practise six kinds of works." "The Kaprias carry their begging bowls (Kamandal) in their hands and beg from door to door." "Some shave their heads, others wear matted hair or keep a tuft." "They (Yogis and Sadhus) wear the ochre robes." "Some live in the crematoriums or in the wastes or woods and eat dirt and throw ashes in their heads." (Asa Var, M.1) "They wear not cotton, but leather". "The Srevras (Jainas) dread clean water, do not bathe themselves and drink mud. They beg for the left-overs from door to door. They pluck their hair and search worms from their excreta (in order to

save their life). They march in a line, one after the other." (Majh-Ki-Var, M. I). "Then, there are the Kanpatta Yogis, with their torn ears and large ear-rings, with a horn to blow, their bodies smeared with ashes, wearing a beggar's robes, a staff in one hand and a begging bowl in the other, with deer-skins to squat on to meditate." "They show miracles to the people like flying in the air, disappearing at will, living buried in snows or underground and eating iron and other uneatables, cursing or blessing people with boons." "Some ascetics put their bodies to great torture, and even immolate themselves at holy places like Kashi (Banaras), get themselves sawn alive, or sleep on iron nails, walk-barefooted, remain naked, do not accept cooked food and live on milk or vegetables, and perform extreme austerities." On the other hand, the *Charvakias* or Vam-margis drink wine, eat meat and indulge in sex as a matter of ritual. The ways of the Yogis and their 12 sects, the divisions of the sanyasis, and of a myriad other sects like *Avadhuts*, *Maunis*, *Bhagautis*, *Tantrics*, *Jangams*, *Jyotshis*, *Jainas*, *Brahmins*, *Charvakias*, and various types of Muslim ascetics, sufis, peers, etc., are detailed in the Adi Granth at great length.

The Brahmins perform yajnas and other rituals, read the Vedas and Sastras—all for wages—bathe themselves at or visit (like other caste Hindus) sixty-eight Hindu pilgrim-stations in India, notably Triveni (the confluence of the three sacred rivers—Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati at Prayag or Allahabad), Ganga (at Haridwar) and Ganga again at Kashi (Banaras). "They wash the wood before they raise fire", "do not accept food cooked by another", "dig up their hearths rather than use the one built upon the earth", "plaster their homes and their kitchen-squares with cow-dung which is considered most sacred." Birth and death are both considered inauspicious and the woman especially is not allowed to touch anything or anyone for forty days after its occurrence, till after due ceremony and expense her "impurity" is washed off. Even menstruation makes a woman 'impure' during that period." (Asa Var, M.I).

There are so many rituals to be performed by the house

holder over which only the Brahmin can preside, and so much to be offered to him and to the relations and caste-men on all occasions—birth, marriage, initiation (for men), death, new business, good or ill-fortune befalling the household (the birth of a daughter, for instance, was a misfortune), propitiation of the dead ancestors on several occasions (especially on auspicious days) every year. etc., etc.

But, the Brahmin had also by now compromised, though surreptitiously, with the ruling class of Muslims. "They accept their money, and even mimick their ways, and are instrumental in levying taxes on the Hindus and all they consider sacred (like the Brahmin and the cow) (Asa Var M.I). "The Brahmin blows his conch and presides over the ceremonies at the houses of tyrants and blood-suckers. "(Ibid)." Even the thieves give away in charity to the Brahmins to propitiate their dead ancestors !" (Ibid).

Instead of an inner spiritual realisation of the identity of the God and the soul, the common men of Hindus are inspired not so much by the Upnaishadic ideals of a Universal God but the Vedic ritual, or *Karma Kanda*, and by the mythological Pauranic tales. The Sikh Scriptures reveal a most remarkable and wide knowledge of the Hindu Pantheon and their religious beliefs, superstitions and practices. Some of the names of the mythological figures which occur, by way of illustration, in the *Adi Granth* are : Rama and Sita; Radha and Krishna; Lakshman (Lachhman), Ravana, Indra, Parsurama, Ajay, Pandavas, Janmeja, Chanderhans, Dhrishat-Budhi, Uma (Parvati), Janaka, Dhoma (the rishi); Dhruva, Kapila. Oodho; Akuru; Ugarsen; Sukhdeva; Parikhhat; Mandhata; Bhabikhan; Bharathri; Durbasa; Hanuman; Raja Puru; Angra (the rishi); Ajamal, Balmik; Kavaliapir; Ganika; Gaja; Sudama; Kubija; Bidar; Prahlada; Daropadi; Sanda-marka; Pingala; Shivji (Shiva); Vishnu; Brahma; Sanaka; Sanandan; Sanat Kumar; Suras; Sidhas; Ganas; Gandharwas; Apasharas; Mohinis; Kinaras; Yakshas; Kansa; Vyasa; Narada; Arjuna; Madhu; Kaitabh; Mehhkaja; Harnakasha (Harna Kashyap); Jarasindh; Kaljaman; Rakatbeej; Kalnem; Daryodhana; Kesi; Chanur; etc., etc.

Eighty-eight crores of Sheikhs, fifty-six crores of Musahibhs, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ lakhs of prophets are sunk in the psyche of the Muslim populace.

The various professions of the people referred to in the Adi Granth are : farming (Kirsan), carding, weaving (Julaha), washing (dhobi); sewing (darzi), extraction of oil from oil-seeds (teli), pottery-making (Kumihar), shopkeeping (bania), gardening (mali), retail or wholesale trade (Banjara, Saudagar), usury (Shah), fighting (Kashatriyas), reading and teaching of the Vedas and presiding over religious ceremonies (Brahmins), shoe-making (chamar), fortune-telling (Jotshi), Jeweller (Saraf), broker (dalal), goldsmith (Suniara), iron-smith (Lohar), carpenter (tarkhan), singer (dhadi), dancer (rasdharri), groom (sais), drummer (doom), watchman (Pahrua), magician (Bajigar), barber (Nai), Government or Private service (Chakri), hunting (shikari), fisherman (Mahi), boatman (Khevat), butcher (Kasai), cowherd (gawala), sweeper (chandal), etc., etc.

The farms are irrigated through Persian wells, or depend upon rainfall. The rainy season is expressed almost in symbols of ecstasy. "The rains have come; I've found my God." It is the season of the union of the separated couples, and those whose grooms are not at home in this season of coolth and verdure ("when the peacocks dance", and "everyone's shame is covered through abundance of food, fodder, cotton and sugarcane" and "the bride weaves her hair in smooth plaits and saturates the parting with vermilion") writhe in anguish.

Some of the metals whose use is extensive at this time are : gold, silver, copper, brass, bronze, glass, iron, coal, rubies, pearls, diamonds, and various other precious metals. A mythical stone—"The philosopher's stone" (*Pāras*) is mentioned over and over again whose very touch transmutes the eight *baser* metals into gold.

Out of the colours, red is considered the most auspicious. The newly, wedded bride is draped in red, so also the man of god when he has the unitive experience. Black colours, significantly enough, is looked as most inauspicious, being

the colour of one "who is separated from the spouse" or has gathered infamy. Ochre colour is patronised by the (fake) Sadhus of various denominations. But white is the colour of the swan, the Saint, and also of age. Yellow is both auspicious and inauspicious, being the colour of spring, as also of the one estranged from God (*Manmukh*). The four Vedas also have a colour associated with each, according to their importance. Muslims wear blue, the Sufis black, the Hindus white. Green being the colour of verdure (and hence of inner illumination) is also auspicious.

Some of the eatables mentioned in the *Adi Granth* are milk, (buffalo's milk has a preference over cow's), wheat-flour, rice, lentils, ghee, salt, sugar, betal-leaves; various kinds of nuts; goat-meat and fish; banana; mango; cocoanut; berries; raisin; cloves; refined sugar; molasses; grapes; honey, etc. Indian hemp and wine are in use both with the yogis and the householders; the rich especially indulge in wine and women. But, tobacco is not mentioned, its use having become prevalent only in the days of Jahangir. The home-made wine is prepared (especially by the yogis) through fermentation of molasses to which are added the *Mahua* flowers and the bark of *Kikkar*, and it is distilled through a funnel like an *Araq*.

Silks and woollens are worn by the rich, cotton by the poor. Thirty-six kinds of delicious foods are mentioned. Paper is indigenously prepared from the *tar* tree and ink either from charcoal or the lamp-black. The earthen lamp is the only means of lighting. The sun and the moon are also compared to two "earthen lamps (*dipak*)". Thefts and dacoities by thieves and highwaymen are also mentioned time and again. The Thugs minister a potion the wayfarers (it is called *thagauri*) which makes their victims lose his consciousness. Prostitutes and procurers are also mentioned with contempt.

Sixteen kinds of womanly embellishments are mentioned—weaving of hair in smooth plaits; parting the hair in the middle; saturating the hair-parting with vermillion (a sign of the wedded state); chewing of betel-leaf and nuts to

sweeten one's breath; wearing of silks and jewellery of various kinds (hand-rings, bracelets, necklace, nose-ring, ear-rings, etc.). The dried skin of walnut is rubbed on the lips to dye them red. A (round or vertical) frontal-mark on the forehead (*tikka*) is considered auspicious. Scents of various kinds are also used, as is soap. "The bed of the wedded bride is decked with jewels, rubies and diamonds." They wear bangles of ivory. Shirts and blouses (*chola-choli*), shalwar and ghagras (bell-bottom trousers) are mentioned, but not dopattas (as head-cover), though references to the veiling of the face (ghund) show clearly that this is the one thing women couldn't do without. Men probably wear their hair long and keep untrimmed beards and moustaches² as sign of piety, and the head is shaven clean only on the death of the father (bhadrā) by the Hindu males, or by sanyasins. The Muslims, of course, did not let their beards grow beyond a handful and trimmed their moustaches in the middle, but the Sufis didn't. Turban is very much in vogue and the beard and the turban are considered to be the symbols of honour.³

Hindu women especially wear their hair long and it is a sign of dishonour for them to shear their locks, or even to exhibit their tresses in public. The custom of dowry is universally prevalent and is approvingly quoted in the Adi-Granth, even though symbolically: "O God ! grant me the 'dowry' of Thy Name".

The word city or town (Shahr) is mentioned by Ravidas only once in the Adi Granth, but all other poets refer only to the village (*pind* or *giraon*). Guru Nanak calls his country "Hindustan", but never for once does he mention "Panjab" in his extensive writings, nor does any other poet of the Granth. The villages are surrounded by high mud-walls with a few cutlets. Apart from the poorer sections (who herd together), the richer classes do not mix freely,

2. "Sir palia, dathi pali, muchhan bhi palian".

(Shalokas of Farid)

3. "Main bholawa pag da, mat meli hoe Jac."

(Shalokas of Farid).

nor are they neighbours to each other. Even the money-lenders (Shahs) and the traders (Vyoparis) live apart.

The bazars are covered and the village streets reasonably wide for human and animal traffic. For a narrow street is compared to "the streets of hell, or the bridge leading to it, according to the Muslim faith (*Pursalat*) (Shalokas of Farid). The streets are muddy which shows that they are not paved. (Ibid). Village Panchayats are held in great esteem. Stones and burnt bricks are used as building material (possibly by the rich). The rich even decorate their buildings with carvings and paintings.

The Hindus are subject to *Jeziā*. Even the Brahmin and the cow are taxed (and why not?). The sign of holiness is expressed through miracles. The Qazi confronts Namdeva with two alternatives : "Either accept Islam and utter "Khuda" abandoning the name of Rama, or perform a miracle and bring to life a dead cow !" He refused to perform the miracle to save his life, and was ordered to be trampled by an elephant, but lo, the elephant made him obeisances and thus God intervened to save the honour of his devotee. But, the Sikh Gurus denounce miracalism as the work of mountebanks and showmen.

The royal army has four kinds of fighting forces—elephant divisions, cavalry, camel corps and infantry. Guru Nanak has mentioned the use of "tupak" (a small artillery gun) by Babur's men. The royal forts have a double wall and are surrounded by three dykes. The armies normally use arrows, spears, swords and double-edged daggers in war, but the royal camp moves with large harems and kitchens, tents, flags, drums and pipes, precious carpets, canopies, etc., and the officers are richly dressed. Even their body guards with their red tassel and decorated kammarbands are a sight to see. Hunting expeditions are highly popular with the royalty and feudal gentry.

Some of the musical instruments mentioned in the Sikh Scripture are: *Sitar*, *Sarangi*, *ik-tara* (one stringed instrument), *tuti* (pipe), *singi* (horn), *rabab* (rebeck), *bansari* (lute), the hand drums (*jori* and *dholak*), *chhaine* (cymbals), war-drum

(*dhol*) *jhanjar* (ankle-bells), *sankh* (conch), *kingri* (fiddle) *bheri* (a small drum), *shahnai*, etc. Out of the trees and flowers, *Chandan* (sandal), *simmal*, *tulsi*, *baint* (reed), *orind* (Castor-oil tree) *Kasumbha* (safflower), *Akka* (swallow-wort), *Chaupati* (water lily) are mentioned again and again. Some of the birds, animals and worms referred to in the *Adi Granth* (more for their inborn habits which they cannot overcome than their mere description) are : pig, dog, donkey, cat, jackal, crane, swallow, camel, horse, elephant, ant, bumble bee, deer, hawk, *garura*, sparrow, parrot, mouse, snakes of various kinds, fish, leopard, lion, tiger, sheep, *charag* (kind of hawk), *kuhi* (kind of hawk), crow, *koel* (cuckoo), *chatrik* peacock, *tandua* (shark), ox, cow, bull, crocodile, swan, frog, *kirli* (lizard), cock, buffalo, honey-bee, goat, eagle, monkey, etc.

Eighty-four lakhs of species are mentioned, half in the waters and half on land. Four sources of creation (*Khanis*) are emphasised, namely, *andaj*, (egg-born), *jairaj* (foetus-born) *utbhuj* (earth-born), and *setaj* (sweat-born). The earth is supposed to have nine divisions (*Khand*), though they are not named. The whole universe is divided into three parts (the world, the underworld or the world under water and the heavens) and fourteen spheres (*lokas*). Human speech is divided into four categories : *Madhama*, *Baikhri*, *Parha*, *Basanti*, as it progresses from the throat, tongue, teeth and finally is uttered with the lips. Seven continents (*dipus*) and seven seas are referred to, but not by name. The popular Hindu belief that the earth is supported by a mythical Bull is ridiculed by Guru Nanak, saying: "there is earth upon earth". (Japu, M.I). That the sun illumines the moon first occurs in the word of Nanak ('*Sas ghar sur samaenda*'). Nanak also rejected the Muslim thesis that there are only seven heavens and seven under-worlds by his declaring emphatically : "There are myriads of heavens and underworlds". (Japu, M.I.). And also that ours is not the only sun : "There are myriads of suns and moons and *Indras* and spheres." (Ibid). He also emphasises that they traverse endless miles without end, "though one day all will come to an end" to be reborn again. Ours is not the first creation, "there have been many creations and dissolutions before"—all through the Will of the

one and only God who ever was and will forever be.

"In the beginning there was nothing but chaos—neither sun there was, nor moon, neither earth nor waters nor stars. Man there wasn't, nor woman, neither trees, nor birds". (Maru, M.I.). So, the thoughts about 'virtue' and 'sin' are also time-bound and change from age to age and people to people (Gauri, Sukhmani, M.5). Matter and energy are also interchangeable, for in essence, they spring from the same source.⁴ These last two are indeed revolutionary doctrines, one in the sphere of ethics and the other in the sphere of physical science.

The fifth Guru, Arjun, refers to human evolution through a very slow process, from the worm to the tree and the bird and animal resulting, finally, in the human form.⁵

That the seasons (six of these are mentioned) were the result of the changing position of the sun in relation to our earth is also mentioned ("*Suraj Eko, rut anek*"). That life is all-pervading, in the plants as much as in water: "which gives life to all"—is emphasised. (Asa Var, M.I). As for creation, Guru Nanak has this to say : "First God created air; from air was water and from water evolved the three worlds and God pervaded all that was". When and at what period of the evolution all this happened is, however, not mentioned.

Many other customs are also referred to. The dead are bathed and draped in silk. Women beat their breasts in mourning screaming "hai-hai". Some are cremated (Hindus), some are buried (Muslims), some are cast into the waters (holy men), some are torn by dogs and eagles (Parsis). The dead are propitiated by the Hindus in the belief that their souls are still alive.

It is the groom who accompanied by a marriage procession, musicians and drummers, would go to the bride's house to solemnise the wedding ceremony. The bride is brought to the groom's house in a palanquin (*doli*) where she is initially received with great courtesy. The mother-in-law waves water over her head and drinks it. Oil is poured on the thres

4. *Nanak, so sukhani, soi asthul*, (Gauri Sukhmani, M.5)

5. *Adi-Granth Gauri Guareri*, M.5

hold (as an auspicious omen) before she crosses it. To go abroad, that is, to go out of one's own village, is a source of great anguish to the bride left behind with her in-laws. To cross the seas was considered extremely treacherous. Perhaps that is how the world is often compared to an 'impassable sea', though it is often mentioned that ships, boats and rafts carry one across to the other shore.

Cow is considered sacred by the Hindus, and pork is forbidden to the Muslims. To appropriate another's due is like tasting "the forbidden meats". With temperate or cold weather is associated also spiritual poise, and with the heat of the summer months "the agony of separation". How sensitive !

Sixty eight places of Hindu pilgrimage are mentioned time and again. Some of the places sacred to the Hindus which are mentioned by name are : Jagannathpuri, Hardwar, Kashi, Kedara, Kurukshetra, Mount Kailash, Gaya, the rivers Ganga, Saraswati, Jamuna, Godavari and Gomti, Prayag (Allahabad), Dawarka, Bindraban, lake Mansarovar, Rishikesh and Mathura. As for the Muslims, only Kaaba is mentioned as their most sacred place of pilgrimage, though the common mass also pay homage to the tombs of *peers* and *faqirs*. Other name-places mentioned in the Adi Granth are : Hindustan, Orrisa, Kabul, Lanka, Kartarpur, Khadur, Khurasan and Beas which shows clearly that except for the river Godavari in the south, Hindustan is identified by and large with north and east India.

The guests and holymen are treated with great consideration. As a sign of reverence, the dust of a holy man's feet anoints the devotees' forehead. The seekers (like the young in relation to the old) fall at the feet of the revered one. Money (*damra*) is freely in use as an item of exchange. The miserly bury their treasures underground and are very often deprived of them by thieves, or worms. The poor do not normally eat the buttered bread and live in improvised mud tenements, as against the luxurious foods and decorated palaces (*dhaular*) of the rich.

IMPACT OF GURU NANAK'S TEACHINGS

**Delivered by
DR GANDA SINGH**

Lecture I

IMPACT OF GURU NANAK'S TEACHINGS ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF SIKHISM (Upto 1606 A.D.)

The impact of Guru Nanak's teachings on the lives of the people of the Panjab was marvellous indeed. It not only raised them spiritually into "men of truthful word, devout austerity and of accepted prayer-mindedness, looking upon friends and foes alike," *Maqbul-al-maqal wa ahli-riazat wa mustjabul-dawat Khewesho begana dar nazar-i-eshan-yaksan wa dost-o-dushman nizz-i-shan barabar* as Munshi Sujan Rai Bhandari of Batala wrote in 1695 in his *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, p. 70, but it also transformed them into saint-warriors who took upon themselves the protection of the poor and helpless against the tyrannical aggressors in the land. This is best illustrated in what Guru Hargobind said to the Maratha saint *Samarth* Ram Das at Srinagar in Garhwal. Guru Hargobind was there on his way to Nanak-mata when saint Ram Das arrived at the place during his pilgrimage rambles towards Badri Kedar and Badri Narayan. He was surprised to see the Sikh Guru armed riding a horse, and accompanied by a large number of followers. The old traditionalist *Sadhu* found it difficult to reconcile the two seemingly opposite phases of Guru Hargobind's life. He asked the Guru: "I had heard that you occupy the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak. Nanak was a *tyagi Sadhu*—a saint who had renounced the world. You are wearing arms and keeping an army and horses. You allow yourself to be called *Sacha Padshah*—a True King. What sort of a *Sadhu* are you?" Guru Hargobind replied: "Internally a hermit and externally a prince. Arms mean protection for the poor and helpless and destruction for the tyrant. Guru Nanak had not renounced the world but had renounced *maya*, the self and ego." *Samarth* Ram Das was pleased to hear this and said: "This appealeth to my mind."

The actual words of the Sakhi are :

ਏਕ ਬੇਰ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਸਮੀਰ ਮੇ ਟਿਕੇ ਬੇ । ਵਹਾਂ ਏਕ ਸਾਧੂ ਦੀਦਾਰ ਕੋ ਆਯਾ । ਦੱਖਣੀ ਥਾ ਨਾਮ ਰਾਮਦਾਸ । ਤਬ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਸ਼ਿਕਾਰ ਖੇਲਤੇ ਆਵਤੇ ਬੇ ਘੋੜੇ ਪਰ ਅਸਵਾਰ । ਸਾਬ ਸਿਖ ਸੰਗਤ ਬਹੁਤ ਥੀ । ਪ੍ਰਸੰਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਹਓ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਥਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੀ ਗੱਦੀ ਪਰ ਬੈਠਾ ਹੈਂ । ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੂ ਤਿਆਗੀ ਸਾਧੂ ਬੇ । ਤੁਮ ਸ਼ਸਤਰ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰੇ ਹੈਨਿ ਘੋੜੇ ਫੌਜ ਰਖੀ ਹੈ । ਸੱਚਾ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਕਹਾਵਤਾ ਹੈਂ । ਕੈਸਾ ਸਾਧੂ ਹੈਂ ।

ਗੁਰੂ ਹਰਿਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਕਹਿਆ ਬਾਤਨ ਫਕੀਰੀ, ਜ਼ਾਹਰ ਅਮੀਰੀ । ਸ਼ਸਤਰ ਗਰੀਬ ਕੀ ਰਖਿਆ, ਜਰਵਾਣੇ ਕੀ ਭਖਿਆ । ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਿਆਗਿਆ ਥਾ, ਮਾਯਾ ਤਿਆਗੀ ਥੀ । ਰਾਮ ਦਾਸ ਪਰਸੰਨ ਹੋਯਾ ਕਹਿਆ ਇਹ ਹਮਾਰੇ ਮਨ ਭਾਵਤੀ ਹੈ । (ਸਾਖੀ 39, ਪੰਜਾਹ ਸਾਖੀਆਂ)

The saint was highly impressed by the words of Guru Hargobind. He could see the truth and vitality thereof in the lives of his Sikh followers whose faith in God and unquestioning surrender to the will of the Guru were to him a hopeful guarantee for the fulfilment of the mission of the first Guru Nanak in the rejuvenation of the people of Hindustan whom the sword and fire of Babar's invading hordes had terrified into political surrender. They had been reduced to abject slavery by the blood-thirsty adventurers from the north-west. With no regard for human life and socio-religious culture of the people of this country, the wolfish foreigners had been for centuries behaving towards them like hungry tigers. This state of affairs could only be ended by infusing a new manly spirit into the depressed and disheartened people of the land who had not only been divided and demoralized but had also been deprived of all interest in life by the negative religio-social philosophy preached to them by their Brahmanical priests and religious leaders. Guru Nanak, saint Ram Das felt, had really diagnosed the malady of the people and had administered to them the right remedies for placing them on the path of healthy and active national life as self-respecting sons of the land. It was evidently, therefore, that Ram Das told Guru Hargobind in his parting words, as recorded by *Shri Hanumant Swami* in his *Shri Samarthanchi-Bakhar* that the Guru already had the right type of instruction and advice from the great master Nanak and that he needed none from himself. In fact, saint Ram Das himself seems to have been inspired by what he saw in the Sikh camp of Guru Hargobind

and this was helpful in initiating the great Maratha warrior Shivaji into a life of national upliftment. On his departure Ram Das presented to the Guru a piece of ochre coloured cloth and a rosary as parting gifts.

It was in the diversity of religions and religious worship that lay the disunity of mankind. There was but one religion and that was the religion of Truth, if anyone were to practise it firmly said Guru Nanak—ਏਕੋ ਪਰਮੁ, ਦ੍ਰਿੜੈ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਈ—*Basant I, Ashtpadi, iii, 3*). And, the oneness of religion depended upon the Oneness of the True God, the creator of the universe—*Ik Onkar, Satnam, Karta purkh*. According to the Guru, He is fearless and without enemy. Guru emphasised on this quality of the Lord as he believed that one becomes like the one he worships or serves—*jaisa sevai taiso hoe* (*Gauri Ashtpadi, vii-4*). And, the Guru wanted his followers not only to be fearless but also without enmity towards anyone. The Guru also described God as Eternal, Birthless and Self-existent. Then alone, the Guru felt, the believers in Him would keep to and would not be diverted into innumerable narrow lanes of various man-made gods and goddesses and of idols and images.

Guru Nanak's parents had belonged to the Bedi or Vedi clan of the second high caste of the Hindu Kshatris or Khatris, well known for their proficiency in Vedic lore. But Guru Nanak had no belief in the classification of people according to their birth. To him, all people were born equal and their caste and class could be determined only by what they did—*Sa zat sa pat hai jehe karm kamai, (Prabhati, Chaudhary, 4)*. All creatures are under the shadow of the same One God. (*Sri Rag, Sloka, 1*). Recognize divine light in everyone and enquire not about caste. There is no caste in the next world (*Asa I-3*).

He denounced the very idea of impurity attached to God's creation and refused to admit of anyone being low, much less untouchable.

Pause for a moment on the thought,

If there is but One self in all, where is the room for hatred ?

And if there is but One Hari (God) in all, where is the room for contempt ?

There is but One God in all. (*Maru, Var, I.*)

The treatment of the high born towards the *sudras*, some of whom had been condemned as untouchables and unapproachables, was most inhuman. It was the very negation of the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. "Nonsense are castes and nonsense are their names" said he. I am with the lowliest of the lowly, the lowest of the low born. What have I to do with the high-ups ? For, Thy grace blesses those who take care of the lowly."

To give a practical demonstration of what he believed in and advocated, he was always accompanied by his life-long friends from amongst the inferior castes, according to the Hindu classification. One was Bala, a Jat, and the other was Mardana, a low caste Muhammadan *Mirasi*, a rebeck player—a *Malechha* in Brahmanical parlance. He called both of them *Bhai* or brother. He saw no difference between Hindus and Muslims, Brahmans and Sudras, touchables and untouchables. To him, all were children of the same One father—God—who is the God of all gods and from whom emanate all souls, and He dwells in all souls (*Salok Sahaskriti, 4*)

Guru Nanak was a strong advocate of the cause of women whom the Brahmanical priests and society had reduced to a state of subjection. The woman, according to him, was in no way inferior to man. In fact, she was a personification of service to the mankind. Without her there could have been no human existence. It is of her that man is born and it is she who keeps the human race going. "Why call her bad or low, of whom are born kings—men great and powerful ?" (*Asa Var, I-19*).

He felt greatly concerned over the political condition of the people under the foreign rule which had not only corrupted the rulers themselves but had also adversely affected the culture and morality of the subjects. The rule of the north-western Pathans was not a Muslim theocracy, nor of the Mughals who had come to India from across the

Amu river to the north of Afghanistan. They had not come here for the propagation of Islam and had not established any theological seminaries for the purpose. It is true that some of the *Ulama* historians have glorified the Muslim invaders as great religious crusaders who had led religious campaigns into the *Kafir*-land of India for the spread of Islam. But by this they have not only falsified history but have also, unwittingly, tarnished the fair name of Islam which nowhere sanctions the kind of brutalities committed by these invaders. The only motive that had brought them to this country was their lust for gold and power.

A person mad after riches is all-blind and dumb and he hearkens not to the word of religion and religious prophets. The same is the condition of the power-hungry aggressors who not unoften transgress all religious ethics and codes of morality and ride rough shod over the rights and sentiments of their victims. This was exactly the state of affairs with the Lodhi rulers of the country and the Mughal invaders whose high-handed oppression, and fire and sword had played havoc among the people of the Panjab. Of this, Guru Nanak had not only been a contemporary but also an eye-witness in many cases. Seeing the tyranny of the domineering Lodhi Kings and their official agents, the Guru observed that the kings behaved like tigers and their subordinate officials like dogs disturbing and oppressing people at all times of day and night. —*Raje shinh muqaddam kutte, jae jagayan baithe sutte*—while the King's officials wounded the people with their nails. The curs licked the blood and bile that trickled down the wounds.

The very fact that some one domineers over another fellow being is sinful. He has no moral right to it. Every one is born free and has right to live free. It is only for mutual help for a family-like happy life, on a reciprocal basis, that the co-operation of other human beings is required and sought, and it is in that spirit of goodwill and understanding that it should be offered. The subjection of one by another to derive undue benefit from his labour engenders dislike and hatred for the aggressor. And when it comes to be multiplied by repeated acts of aggression,

there is at first a protest and then a revolt with such a vehemence as to cause loss not only to the aggressor's self and power but also to his very life and to the lives of his near and dear ones. The aggression and oppression over one's weaker fellow beings is not only sinful but is also irreligious—a gross disobedience of the teachings of the great masters and prophets, whether of the east or the west. And, such an aggressor is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim in the true sense of the word.

According to Guru Nanak, a man's religion lies in his conduct of life, in his behaviour towards God's creation—his fellow beings, and not merely in his external appearance and soft-spoken words. The externals are only aids to help him keep to the path of righteousness. It was therefore that he said to the Gorakhpanti Siddha Yogis during his visit to Gorakhmata (now called Nanakmata):

Yoga or religion does not consist in an ascetic's patched coat, a Yogi's staff, or in ashes smeared on the body.

Religion does not consist in wearing ear-rings, close cropping of the head or in blowing horns.

Religion does not consist in mere words.

He who looks on all men as equal is religious.

Religion does not consist in living in cemeteries or places of cremation or in sitting in postures of contemplation.

Religion does not consist in wanderings to foreign lands or in bathing at places of pilgrimage.

Abide in God, pure amidst the impurities of the world, thus shalt thou find the way of the religion. (*Suhi I, Ghar vii, 1-2*).

Guru Nanak had no sympathy for the way of life of the ascetic Siddhas and yogis who had forsaken the world and with it, their duties and obligations to society. He was a man of the masses and a prophet of the people. He refused to sit idle feelinglessly in slumbering meditation like the *Yogis* while the people around them groaned under the heel of the oppressor. He expressed his deep concern

for his people in his conversation with the Gorakhpanti *yogis* of Mount Meru. "The earth is all siezed by sin. The accomplished saints and sages, the Siddhas, are hiding themselves in the recesses of mountains. Who (no one) is there to save the world" ? (Bhai Gurdas, *Var*, 1-29.)

He wished his disciples to be servants of God through service of His people. "Having created the human body, God has installed His very self therein", said he. And, "this world is the chamber of God wherein the True One resides" — *Ih Jagg Sache ki hai kothri, Sache ka vich vas*. Therefore, with this human body, "Let us be of service in this world so that we may find a seat in the Court of the Lord"—*Vich Duniya sev kamayie tan dargeh baisan paiye*. "Man's life is as his acts constrain him. As a man soweth, so shall he reap, as he earneth so shall he eat," Rag Suhi. "Love of God will germinate in thy heart, and thus shalt thou gain imperishable merit" (*Rag Sorath*). "Truth is (no doubt) higher than everything, but higher still is truthful living". (*Sri Rag*).

The Guru had been born in a predominantly Muslim area and had spent years of his youth at Sultanpur, the virtual capital of the Lodhis. At the latter place he had not only seen the practical lives of the ruling people but also of the priestly class. He had also travelled throughout the length and breadth of India and also to the centres of Islamic culture in the west where he had seen at close quarters the difference between the great humanitarian precepts of the Prophet as contained in the Holy Quran and the egocentric lives of some of the Muslim rulers and priests. While the main central theme of Islamic teachings is the Unity and Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, as proclaimed in the *Rab-ul-Alamin, Wahid hu la shrik*, the self-centred and power-mad Afghan rulers looked upon themselves as superior beings and upon their Hindu subjects as inferiors and infidels. This was self-contradictory, said Guru Nanak and he observed:

It is difficult to call oneself a Musalman.

If he is really one (with the following virtues), then

alone is he one.

First of all let him scrape and polish his mind clean with the sweetness of faith (in God) ;

And then, with faith in the leader of the faith, let him dispel the illusion of life and death.

Let him submit to the will of God, and with faith in the Eternal Creator, let him lose his self.

Let him be merciful to all creatures; then, sayeth Nanak, can he be called a Musalman, (*Majh Var*, I, viii-i),

He alone is a Musalman who scrubs off impurities from his mind and action. (*Dhanasri* I, 4-5-7.)

To usurp some one else's right is like pork for one (Muslim) and beef for another (Hindu). (*Majh Var*, I, vii-2.)

Let mercy be thy mosque, faith thy prayer-mat, and honest life thy holy book.

To be a real Musalman, let humility be thy circumcision, and cool-headedness thy fasts.

Let good actions be thy holy place of pilgrimage, truth thy spiritual guide, and kind actions thy sacred text be.

Let His will be thy rosary, then, sayeth Nanak, will He preserve thy honour (as a true Musalman). (*Majh Var*, I, *slok*, vii-i.)

It may be observed that Guru Nanak did not criticise any religion as such. He only criticised the ways of the lives of such of their followers as had strayed away from the path and suggested to them what a true *dharma* should be and how a true Musalman should conduct himself, in his relationship with the other sons and daughters of the *Rab-ul-Alamin*.

It is true that the teachings of Guru Nanak mostly related to the spiritual uplift of mankind and social goodwill and understanding among people of different creeds and classes as children of the same One father, but he was not a visionary idealist or a speculative theorist. He was a practical man devoted to the service of mankind and his heart bled to see the miseries of people wherever they were.

At home, he was intensely patriotic as a true son of India and shed tears of blood to see the devastation caused by the invasion of Babur in 1521 A.D. when the Mughal hordes sacked and burnt down the town of Saidpur (Eminabad). "Babur rushed down from Kabul with the bridal procession of sin," said the Guru, "and by force demanded the hand of he bride (of Hindustan). People sang the paean of murder and smeared themselves with saffron of blood" (*Tilang*, I, *ghar* i, 5-1). "Khurasan came to be protected and Hindustan was terrorized...Didst Thou, O Lord, feel no compassion when people wailed during so much of destruction. Thou art the same for all." He was greatly moved to see the pitiable condition of the Indian women at the hands of the Mughal soldiers. "The women who wore beautiful tresses...have their locks shorn with scissors and dust is thrown upon their heads...dishonoured and with ropes round their necks, they are carried away by soldiers." (*Asa* I, *Asht*, xi).

The sack of Saidpur is thus described in the *Tarikh-i-Farishta* of Muhammad Qasim :

Baber, in the year nine hundred and twenty-six (1520 A. D.) marched third time towards India, chastising the Pathans in his way, till reached Sialcot, the inhabitants of which country submitted, and saved their possessions. But the people of Saidpoor, erecting the standard of defence, were, in the end, put all to the sword, their wealth given up to depredation, and their children and wives carried away captive (Alex. Dow, *The History of Hindustan*, 1792, p. 11, 114).

The number of men and women carried away as slaves on this occasion is mentioned as thirty thousand.

"If a powerful person were to attack another equally powerful person," said Guru Nanak, "there shall be no (or much less) ground for grievance, but if a ferocious lion were to fall upon a herd of cattle, the master (the protector) of the herd should be answerable for it" (*Asa*, I, 39-42). In equally strong language Guru Nanak upbraided the so-called 'Masters of the herd,' the Lodhi

Sultans of India, for not standing manfully for the defence of their subjects and allowing the precious gem of the country-India-to be easily snatched away by the foreigners. To quote his own words: "The dogs (the Lodhi rulers) have thrown away the invaluable gem. When they are dead and gone, no one will remember them with regard" (*Asa* I, 39-42).

These sayings and admonitions of Guru Nanak went down as a heritage to Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh and help explain to some extent the gradual transformation of Sikhism into a militant church, sanctifying the use of arms in the service of weak and helpless, referred to by Guru Hargobind in his conversation with Saint Ram Das as mentioned earlier.

But men do not always live by *jnan* or knowledge imparted to them by saints and scholars. They mostly follow the habits acquired by them in the company of their friends, good or bad. If they were all guided by *jnan*, this world of ours would be the land of godly people. But, in fact, it is mostly the land of those who follow the devilish ways of Satan, of self and ego, of pain and misery, both for them selves and for others. It was, therefore, that Guru Nanak organized his disciples and followers into *sangats* or congregations where they met in a spirit of good will and understanding, sang the hymns of the Master and prayed to the Lord to grant to them gift of the recitation of His Holy Name, of honest livelihood and sharing their earnings with others and of service of their fellow beings at large, without distinction of caste and creed. Wherever the Guru went during his tours and travels, he established these *sangats*. In due course of time, they became centres of Sikh missionary movement for the spread of the Master's message, and for the demonstration and practice of his teachings. To these *Sangats* were added *Pangats* or sitting together of all present in rows for dining, irrespective of caste and creed, of Hindu and Muslim, or of rich and poor. These two institutions not only helped knit together the followers of the Guru as equal and brothers in faith—*Gur-Bhai*—but also to win the sympathy and approbation of their Hindu and Muslim neighbours and countrymen. The forums of *Sangats* were known as *dharamsalas*.

Guru Nanak's own place of *Sangat* or congregation at Kartarpur (now in Pakistan) on the western side of the river, opposite to Dera Baba Nanak in the Gurdaspur district, was known as *Baba Nanak di Dharmshala*. It was in these *Sangats* that the *Sikhs*, as the disciples of Guru Nanak came to be called, learnt to practise Sikhism, shook off their old prejudices and rubbed off their angularities. Here they all addressed one another as *Bhai* or brothers as Guru Nanak addressed his companions and disciples like *Bhai* Mardana, of Muslim origin and *Bhai* Bala, *Bhai* Buddha, *Bhai* Lehna (his successor), coming from amongst the Hindus, and completely ignored the social and religious distinctions of the Brahmanical faith to which they no longer subscribed. Maubid Zulfiqar Ardistani, the Parsi author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, who had seen Sikhism in practice at Kartarpur under the guidance of Gurus Hargobind and Har Rai in the forties of the seventeenth century, tells us:

"There is no restriction among them that a Brahman may not become the disciple of a Khatri, for Nanak was a Khatri and no Guru among them was from the Brahmans... Similarly they placed Khatri under the authority of the Jats who belong to the low caste of the *Vaishya*, as the big *masands* of the Guru are mostly Jats. The Brahmans and Khatri become the pupils and disciples of the Guru through the medium of *Masands* and are accepted into the pupilage and discipleship of the Guru" (p. 233).

At Kartarpur, Guru Nanak lived as a house-holder with his wife and sons, taking to agriculture as his profession. His missionary activities, however, continued as usual. This in itself was a lesson for the *Sikhs* to learn. They were to live in the world among their kith and kin, follow their usual vocations of life, and share their earnings with others in the name of God. This was for them their service and worship of God through service of their fellow beings. Thus Guru Nanak's *Dharmshala* at Kartarpur became a true demonstrative laboratory for the practical training of the *Sikhs* who were to continue the religio-social movement of Sikhism after him. The first essential for the successful continuance of a movement is for its followers to enter literally into the spirit of the teachings of the founder-master

and to so adapt them in their lives as to completely identify themselves with him. And this is what happened at the Kartarpur *dharmsala* which had attracted a number of disciples from different parts of the country. The most devoted of them was Lehna of Khadur whom the Master selected as the next *Guru* to guide the new community after him.

This was a very happy choice indeed, and Guru Nanak installed him in his place during his life-time under the new name of *Guru Angad*, meaning his own limb, his veryself. The Guruship was not a temporal rank to be inherited by his sons. It was a spiritual mission and the spirit of the Master blended with that of the disciple who, on his part, completely merged his personality with that of the founder-Guru and identified himself with him as a part and parcel of his. And thus Angad became a continuation of Nanak. In the same way, all the succeeding Gurus merged into the preceding Nanak-Guru and, in turn, became Nanak themselves. They all composed and sang their hymns under the one common name of Nanak, and not under their own respective names. Thus, the first Guru Nanak continued to be, in spirit, the leader and head of the Sikh movement, eliminating the possibility of schismatic divisions. The author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* summed up the theory of Guruship when he said, during the time of Guru Hargobind and Guru Har Rai, "The belief of the Sikhs is that all the Gurus are Nanak" (p. 232).

The discipline of the Sikhism as a systematized regular way of life was a distinct improvement upon the practice followed by some of the previous movements whose leaders were more or less individualistic in their attitude towards life and whose disciples were named after the leaders themselves and not after their systems of religious belief. For example, the disciples of Ramananda were called *Ramanandi* and of Kabir and Ravidas (who were both the disciples of Ramananda) as *Kabirpanthi* and *Ravidasi* respectively. But the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors were all known as Sikhs, including the Gurus themselves. In almost all the cases, the succeeding Gurus

were appointed and installed during the life-time of the reigning Gurus who formally bowed to their successors and accepted them as their masters and themselves as their Sikhs or disciples. This was the impact of Guru Nanak's discipline and humility upon his successors and followers.

The Guru in Sikhism is the spiritual guide to lead his disciples on the path of God and godliness. He is a guide, a perfect man, who has realized God in his practical life. He however, does not claim for himself any special position in relation to the Sikhs beyond that of a teacher. A Sikh will, as well, rise to the same spiritual heights as the Master, provided he faithfully follows the instructions in the conduct of his life. There will be no difference between the two (*Asa, Chhant*, IV, 8, 7, 9.) But Guru Gobind Singh goes a step further when he says :

He alone is a Sikh who follows the discipline laid down.

Nay, he becomes my Master and I, his servant.

The voluntary surrender of Guru Gobind Singh to the fold of the baptized *Singhs*, the *Khalsa*, was a thing unique in the history of religions. It not only provides a practical illustration of raising the disciples and devotees to a level of equality with the Guru but also abolishes personal Guruship among the Sikhs for all time to come.

Guru Angad was a zealous missionary who strengthened the unifying institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* introduced by Guru Nanak. He also felt the need of collecting and recording the hymns and biography of the Guru so that his teachings could be permanently preserved in a compact form for the coming generations. At the same time, he popularized the use of the Punjabi script, the Gurmukhi, among the people to encourage the spread of education among the masses of the country. The Devnagri and the Arabic or Persian scripts were, already there, no doubt, but they did not meet the requirements of the Panjabi language in respect of its correct writing and expression. Moreover, the Devnagri was the preserve of the Brahman scholars who used it exclusively for the Sanskrit language and Hindu religious literature which was not open for study to all classes of people, whereas the

Guru's teachings welcomed all people without any distinction of caste and creed, including the *malechhas* and the untouchables. Moreover, most of the people lived in the villages which had no facilities for its teaching, nor those, living in rural seclusion and subsisting on agriculture, had the time and mental application required for learning this highly developed and intricate script. The Persian script was then taught in the *maktabs* run in mosques by Muslim Mullahs for teaching the Quran and other Islamic literature, against which there was the religious prejudice raised by the Brahmanical priests. And these Arabic-Persian schools also like the Sanskrit *Pathshalas*, were to be found in towns and cities far away from the reach of the village people. The Persian letters also, like the Devnagri, did not correctly represent some of the sounds of Panjabi. Keeping in view the requirements of the Panjabi language, Guru Nanak had so modified the Sharda and Takri letters, known as *Lande* or the tail-less, as to express the Panjabi sounds properly. The letter $\equiv$ was added to the script to represent the sound between hard ᳵ or ᳶ . This sound is peculiar to the Punjabi language and has since been adopted by Devnagari by adding a dot at the bottom of ᳵ and by Persian script by placing a small ت (t) on the top of its ر (r).

As tradition has it, the first biography of Guru Nanak was written during the time of Guru Angad and it greatly encouraged the use of the Gurmukhi script and helped develop the study of the Panjabi language among all classes of people, including Hindus and Muslims. The latter, however, mostly used the Persian script for it. Of late, particularly since the second quarter of the present century, there has developed a very healthy tendency among the Muslims of the Panjab also to learn and use the Gurmukhi script for their Panjabi writings. This has greatly added to the popularity of the Muslim writers as also to the appreciation of their style and idiom which, in fact, are more true representatives of the Panjabi language than those of many of the Indian writers who not unoften are guilty of hybridizing it with an overdose of Sanskrit. The cross-breeding of Sanskrit, which has been dead for centuries for

all practical purposes and has never been the spoken language of any part of the country, much less of the Panjab, is producing a strange type of hotch-potch, indigestible by scholars and highly distasteful to average Panjabis. And, historically, it is giving a staggering blow to the work done for the growth and advancement of the Panjabi language by the early founding-fathers and its well wishers during the late nineteenth century and the first half of the present century.

The removal of caste and class prejudices preached by Guru Nanak received further impetus during the days of the third Nanak, Guru Amardas (1552-74) who made it mandatory for all visitors to partake of the food served in the *Guru ka Langar* before they had an interview with him. This was strictly observed and there was no relaxation in any case. Even the greatest of the great in the land, such as Emperor Akbar, and the high caste Rajput Raja of Haripur of the Shivalak Hills had to observe it.

The social emancipation of women envisaged by the Great Master was an important item on his programme. He not only opposed the practice of *pardah*, the veiling of women, but also led a vigorous campaign against *Sati* or burning alive or self-immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands. According to him :

Satis are not those who burn themselves on the funeral pyres. *Satis* are those, sayeth Nanak, who were dead with the shock of separation.

Those are also *Satis* who lead a life of humility and chastity And always serve masters with full devotion.

(Sūhī Vār, III-6.)

With a view to maintaining the impact of Guru Nanak's mission in transforming the lives of his followers into ideal Sikhs, who had now spread throughout the length and breadth of India, the third Guru established as many as twenty-two centres under the direction of devoted and influential Sikhs. These centres came to be known as *manjīs* as their leaders, out of respect, were generally seated in their congregations on *chārpāīs* or bedsteads, called *manjīs* in the Panjabi. With the expansion of the missionary work and increase in the

number of Sikhs and their congregations, fifty two smaller centres called *Pirhās* were attached to the *manjīs*. During the time of the fourth Guru, Ram Das, they all came to be known as *masand*, or persons occupying elevated seats. According to the *Dabistān*, "During the time of each *mahal* or Guru the Sikhs increased till in the reign of Guru Arjan Mall they became numerous, and there were not many cities in the inhabited countries where some Sikhs were not to be found."

It should be known that in the reign of the Afghan kings, the nobles were addressed in writing as *masnad-i-Āli* or the High Seat. Subsequently by frequent use, the Indians have reduced the word to *masand*. And as the Sikhs consider the Gurus *Sachā Pādshāh*, that is the True King, they call their agents *masand*. They call them *Ramdās* (servants of God) also.

In the time of *mahals* before the fifth *mahal* (or Guru Arjun), no *bhet* (offerings) or tribute was collected from the Sikhs. Whatever was presented by the Sikhs themselves was accepted (and deemed enough). During his time, Arjun Mall deputed one person to the Sikhs of every city so that he might collect tribute and offerings from them.

People began to become Sikhs of the Guru through the medium of *masands*. The chief *masands* through whom large numbers became Sikhs of the Guru, appointed deputies on their own behalf so that in every place and *mahal* (or *parganah*) people having at first become *melī* (associates or pupils) of the *masand*, through the *masand's* agent, became the Sikhs of the Gurus.

The Sikhs have so decided that (the life) of an *Udāsī* or a renouncer of the world is not praise-worthy. Therefore, some of the Sikhs of the Guru do agricultural work and some trade and a multitude take up service.

Every year, according to the extent of money earned by them, they send (their dues) to the *masands* in the form of offerings. The *masands* do not touch them (that is, they do not appropriate any part of them to their own use). Other than this, whatever they bring during the year for the *masand* (himself), for conveying their *bhet* to the court

of the Guru, is spent by him for himself, if the *masand* has no other means of livelihood. But if he himself is engaged in some business or profession, he never soils himself by (mis-appropriating to himself the offerings of the Sikhs). Collecting all (the offerings), he conveys them to the Guru.

In the month of Baisakh (April), when the sun is in the sign of Taurus, the *masands* assemble at the court of the Guru. Whoever from among the members of the *masands'* congregations wishes, and is able to undertake the journey, comes to the Guru with the *masands*. At the time of taking leave (from the presence of the Guru), the Guru bestows a turban on each of the *masands*.

Guru Ram Das (Nanak IV, 1574-81) gave to the Sikhs a religious centre, a Jerusalem, a Mecca, of their own in the city of Amritsar founded by him in 1574. This lent to the sikh organization a compactness and solidarity which were needed the most at this stage of its development. It was reserved for the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan (1581-1606) to give them a holy book, the *Granth Sāhib*, wherein he collected not only the writings of the founder—Guru Nanak and his successors, including himself but also of a number of Hindu, Muslim and so-called untouchable saints and sages of India. This was in keeping with the teachings of the first Guru Nanak who looked upon all Godly men as worthy of reverence. The scripture of the Sikhs, as such, may rightly be called the Bible of the People. The most remarkable thing about it is that it is written in the spoken language of the people to whom the Masters delivered their message of devotion to God and service to humanity. In addition to its cosmopolitan character and outlook, it is the only scripture which has come down through the generations in its original form without the change of a single letter or a vowel sign. Its first manuscript is preserved in Gurdwara Sheesh-Mahal at Kartarpur in the Jullundur district.

To keep the Sikhs away from drifting into the ascetic ways of life, Guru Arjun encouraged them to follow the usual occupations of life. Worldly riches were no longer to be considered *māyā*. They could be helpful in the conduct of human affairs. 'For a religious man it was not unholy to get

wealth provided he spent it in God's way, and gave, and lived in comfort.' The majority of Sikhs lived on agriculture and trade, and a number of them took up service. We have been told by Azur Sasaki *Maubid* Zulfiqar, that they contributed liberally to the common fund known as *Guru-kī-golak*. *Daswandh* or ten percent of the income was the minimum expected of a Sikh. This was in keeping with the teachings of Guru Nanak endorsed by Guru Arjun. *Vār Sārang*, I-22; *Gujrī Vār* V, 2-17; Bhai Gurdas *Vār*, 1-3)

The increasing importance of Guru Arjun and the popularity of the Sikh teachings, both among Hindus and Muslims, aroused great apprehensions in the mind of Emperor Jahangir. They were evidently excited by the advocates and agents of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's Naqshbandi persuasion.

Disappointed at Emperor Akbar's policy of religious tolerance towards the non-Muslims, the Naqshbandi revivalists had won over Jahangir to assume the character of the defender of the Muslim faith and play the role of a puritan. As history knows it, Jahangir was not much of a puritan during his early life as a prince. Far from it. At times leaning towards Christianity, at others towards Hinduism, he was a man of confused religious views, with no fixed moral scruples, a debauchee, always soaked in wine. In his impatience to be crowned he was suspected of having administered poison to his father in 1591. But the Emperor's constitution seemed to postpone indefinitely the close of his life. In 1601, he burst out in open rebellion and assumed the royal title and had his father's dearest friend and supporter, Shaikh Abul Fazl, murdered in 1602. This had afforded a very favourable opportunity to the Naqshbandi revivalists to extract from Prince Salim, the future Emperor Jahangir, as a price for their support to his claim to the Imperial throne, the solemn oath binding him to stand as a defender of Islam against the inroads of *Kufr* or heathenism, as they called the non-Muslim religions.

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was the head of the Naqshbandi *Silsilah* in the Panjab and the north-west and he was burning with rage against the propagation and spread of the Sikhs

teachings in his own diocese and under his very nose. The opportunity to pounce upon the head of the Sikh faith, Guru Arjun, came handy during the flight of Jahangir's rebellious son Prince Khusrau to the Panjab and his short stay of an hour or two at the Sikh town of Goindwal on the high way to Lahore. It was reported to the pursuing Emperor, about a month after his arrival at Lahore and when the Prince had been captured, that the Guru had blessed the prince during his halt at Goindwal. This was all a concoction of the interested traducers of the Guru, but the Emperor was not in a mood to hold an enquiry and get at the truth. His mind had already been prejudiced against the Guru and he was only waiting for an opportunity to put an end to his preachings. This is evident from his own writing in his autobiography, the *Tuzuk-i-Jahāngīrī*, where in he says:

"There lived at Goindwal on the bank of the river Biah (Beas) a Hindu named Arjun in the garb of a *Pīr* and *Shaikh*, so much so that he had by his ways and means captivated the hearts of many simple minded Hindus, nay, even of foolish and stupid Muslims, and he had noised himself about as a religious and worldly leader. They called him *Gurū*, and from all directions, fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. For three or four generations they had kept this shop warm. For a long time the thought had been presenting itself to me that either I should put an end to this false traffic or he should be brought into the fold of Islam."

"At last, during the days when Khusrau passed along this road, this insignificant fellow made up his mind to see him and conveyed preconceived things to him and made on his forehead a finger-mark in saffron which in Hindu terminology is called *qashqā* (*teekā*) and is considered propitious. When this came to the ears of Our Majesty, and I fully knew his heresies, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence and, having handed over his houses, dwelling places, and children, to Murtza Khan (*Shaikh* Farid Bukhari) and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures."

In this statement Emperor Jahangir has levelled two

charges against the Guru :

- (i) The popularity of the religious teachings and the ways of the life of the Guru amongst the Hindus and Muslims who looked upon him as a religious leader.

This had so upset and irritated Jahangir as to use very undignified language for the Guru and his followers whom he calls simpletons, fools and stupids. This explains why he had in a hurry passed the death-sentence against Guru Arjan. His rebellious son had been finally dealt with and the Imperial crown of Delhi had been secured to him through the successful efforts of Shaikh Farid Bukhari, entitled Murtza Khan, a devoted disciple of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. He was, as such, under a deep debt of gratitude to the champions and leaders of the revivalists among the Muslim nobles on whose active support he had also to depend in future for the consolidation of his power. And since this was the first case of complaint against a non-Muslim religious leader through whose preachings Hindus and Muslims had been attracted to the teachings of Sikhism, and the field for Islamic proselytization was being reduced, Emperor Jahangir, to prove his fidelity to the oath of acting as a defender of Islam, had but to meet their wishes of doing away with the Guru. The execution of Guru Arjan was a most welcome news to Shaikh Ahmad who, in his jubilation, wrote to Shaikh Farid Bukhari :

“The execution of the accursed *Kafir* of Goindwal at this time is a very good achievement indeed and has become the cause of a great defeat of the hateful Hindus. With whatever intention they are killed and with whatever objective they are destroyed, it is a meritorious act for the Muslims. Before this *Kafir* was killed, I had seen in a dream that the Emperor of the day had destroyed the crown of the head of *Sikh* or infidelity. It is true that this infidel was the chief of the infidels and a leader of the *Kafirs*...The object of levying *Jeziya* on them is to humiliate and insult the *Kafirs*, and *Jehad* against them and hostility towards them are the necessities of the Muhammadan faith.”

(*Maktubat*, I-iii, letter No. 193, pp. 95-6.)

This speaks volumes for the real cause of the martyrdom

of Guru Arjan who, in the eyes of Shaikh Ahmad, was the chief of infidels—*Reis-i-ahl-i-shirk* and a leader of the *Kafirs imam-i Ahl-i-Kufr*—for whose humiliation and destruction he has in his correspondence, repeatedly urged upon his devoted follower Shaikh Farid Murtaza Khan as the necessities of the Muhammadan faith, saying : *Jehad bil Kuffar wa ghilzat bar ishan az zaruriyat-i-din ast* (*Maktubat-i-imam Rabbani*, No. 193).

The second charge of blessing and anointing the rebel prince cannot stand the test of historical scrutiny and had, evidently, been trumped up to excite the ire of the short-tempered Emperor to issue the orders of the Guru's execution all at once without making any enquiries about it. The Guru was not a politician to be in any way interested in the success of the prince's rebellion. As for the *qashqā* or *teekā*, never in the history of the Gurus there has been any occasion for any Guru to anoint anyone, Sikh or non-Sikh. Even the succeeding Guru was never *teekā'd* by any Guru himself. This practice was followed by all the Gurus up to the time of the last Guru. Guru Arjun could not have departed from and gone against the accepted practice of his religion. All this has been discussed at some length in *Guru Arjun's Martyrdom re-interpreted*, published by Guru Nanak Mission, Patiala, in 1969.

Lecture II

IMPACT OF GURU NANAK'S TEACHINGS ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF SIKHISM (AFTER 1606 A)

Guru Arjan's execution under the orders of Emperor Jahangir was the worst type of tyranny answering to the observations of Guru Nanak that "the age of Kali was like a sharp knife and the kings behaved like butchers; righteousness has taken to wings and fled; in the darkest of dark nights, the moon of truth is not to be seen—*Kal kātī rāje kāsāi, dharm pankh kar udriā, kūr amāvas, sach chandramā dīse nāhi kah charhiā* (*Mājh Vār I, Slok 16—1*). The Emperor's *Tuzuk* tells us that the Great Mughal, in his fanatical high-handedness had not only ordered the confiscation of the martyred Guru's residential houses and *dharmśālās* but had also ordered the imprisonment of his son and successor Guru Hargobind who was for some time incarcerated in the fort of Gwalior. This was a direct blow to destroy, root and branch, the whole organization of the Sikh church which he described as *dukān-i-bātil*, a shop of falsehood, and which he wished to demolish altogether.

Sikhism was purely a socio-religious movement aiming at peaceful emancipation of the people from ungodly prejudices and practices and at diverting them to the path of godliness, honest living and goodwill towards all, with enmity towards none. It had no hand in current politics. Nor had the Sikhs any strong political power at its back to act as a deterrent against Mughal persecutions. Themselves, they were peaceful law-abiding citizens with no means of protection and resistance against the aggression of the then greatest empire of the world. "If a powerful person were to attack another powerful person, there shall be no cause for grievance, but if a ferocious lion were to attack a herd of cattle, the master of the herd should

take the responsibility of its protection," Guru Nanak had said (*Āsā*, I, *Ghar* VI-5). But in this case, the masters of people, the Mughal rulers of the country, had themselves decided to smother the Sikh movement because it happened not to belong to their own faith. The only alternative there—fore left to the new leader of Sikhs, Guru Hargobind, the sixth Nanak, if he were to keep alive the church of Guru Nanak, was to so mould their outlook as to give due attention to the development of their physical strength along with spiritual attainments. Then alone, in due course-of time could he, he thought, transform his people into a new warrior type of saints capable of defending themselves against tyrannical aggression without being aggressive themselves. And this idea worked wonders as subsequent history has shown.

To begin with, Guru Hargobind (1606-45) himself wore two swords on the occasion of his accession at the Akal Takht at Amritsar as emblems of his spiritual and temporal position—*Pīri* and *Mīri*—the combination of *Degh* and *Tegh*—the kettle to supply food to the needy and the sword to protect the weak and helpless. This was the first step towards the transformation of Sikhism into a militant church. According to *Maubid* Zulfiqar, 'The Guru had seven hundred horses in his stables, three hundred cavaliers and sixty artillery-men were always in his service.' This was the first corps of Sikh volunteers raised by the Guru at Amritsar. But as Emperor Jahangir found no hostile intentions in the changes introduced in the organization, there were no more harassments of the Guru. Perhaps he had also come to know, not long afterwards, that Guru Arjan had been innocent and thus he had suffered on account of wrongful reports made against him. After Jahangir's death, the Guru had to face occasional vexations from the Mughal officials during the reign of Shahjahan and he had to fight as many as four battles against them.

Guru Hargobind, however, was not exclusively a militarist. He was primarily a Guru, a teacher and a missionary of his faith. For this purpose, he undertook an extensive tour to the east and re-established at Nanakmata Bhai Almast whom the Gorakhpanthi Naths had ousted

from his *dharmśālā*. It was during this tour that he had met at Srinagar in Garhwal the great Maratha Saint *Sāmarth* Ramdas, of whom a mention was made in the beginning, and who had been deeply impressed by the transformation of the disciples of Guru Nanak into saint-soldiers.

Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru (1645-61), spent most of his time in preaching in the Jullundur Doab and the Malwa territory and deepened the impact of the Master-Guru's teachings on the minds of the people. And it is an undeniable fact of history that it was the result of this impact that the Sikhs of these areas not only stood by Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Singh Bahadur in their days of adversity but also acted as bulwark and shelter for their brothers-in-faith during the first half of the eighteenth century when the Khalsas were outlawed by Emperor Bahadur Shah (1707-12) and his successors and were ordered to be killed at sight wherever found.

Guru Har Rai's son and successor Guru Har Krishan (1661-64) was followed by Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-75). Born in 1621, he was 53 when he became the Guru. Quiet and contemplative by nature, he was a man of an exceptionally cool mind, with a detached view of life, shunning lime-light. He, however, did not believe in taking to ascetic way of life. Living as a house-holder like his predecessors, he devoted his early life to the study of the holy scripture and became one with the teachings of Guru Nanak. On being called upon to shoulder the responsibility of the high office of Guruship, he undertook extensive tours in the country to keep the flame of Sikhism lighted up and to enthuse and strengthen the *Sangats* established by the previous Gurus. His visits to the Uttar-Pradesh, Behar, Bengal and Assam are still commemorated in the large number of Sangats and Gurdwaras maintained at Allahabad, Benares, Patna, Dacca, Dhubri and other places.

While the Guru was in Assam, he evidently received the news that as a result of the Emperor Aurangzeb's policy, the Hindus and Sikhs were passing through hard times. On April 8, 1669, says Saqi Mustad Khan's *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, "His majesty, eager to establish Islam, issued orders to the

governors of all the provinces to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels and with utmost urgency put down the teachings and public practice of the religion of these mis-believers" (*trans.* J. N. Sarkar, pp. 51-52; Urdu, *trans.*, p. 54.). This general order of the Emperor was having its effect. The Sikhs too, according to Khafi Khan, came in for their share; their temples were being destroyed and their leaders exterminated. (*Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, ii. 651-52). The Guru evidently felt that his place then was with his people and that he could not stay away when they were suffering under the inequities of the Government. He, therefore, rushed to the Panjab in 1671, leaving his family at Patna, and arrived at Anandpur in early 1672. He was anxious to do something which would shame the rulers into reason and rouse the people of their lethargy.

He undertook an extensive tour of the Malwa and south-eastern Panjab, heartening the people and exhorting them to give up all fear and to face tyranny with resolute calmness, with full faith in God, as practised and preached by the previous Gurus. "Frighten not and fear not" said the Guru. He who tries to frighten others is a bully, and a bully is a coward who always keeps on shivering in his shoes. Guru Arjan had said, "he who vents his wrath on the weak and helpless is burnt in fire by the Almighty Lord. The Creator-Lord is All-justice and is the protector of his servants." (*Gauri* V, 167). And in the words of Saint Kabir, "The oppressor is a tyrant and is ultimately answerable to God (for his misdeeds). Unable to face God, he is struck on the face" (*Slok* 200).

Wherever the Guru went, he was hailed as a champion of *dharma* and was visited by large number of people. It was in these days that the Islamization of the Pandits of Kashmir was being vigorously pursued by the Mughal governor of the valley. According to Bamezel's *A History of Kashmir*, p. 371. "Iftikhar Khan (1671-75 A. D) tyrannized over the Brahmans to such an extent that they approached Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, at Anandpur in the Punjab and solicited his personal intervention with the Emperor." The deputationists chose as their spokesman one Pandit Kirpa Ram

Datt, a Saraswat Brahman of Mattan, who had for sometime been a tutor to his young son Gobind Singh. The receipt of the news of large number of people accompanying the Guru during his tour in the Malwa region and of his encouraging and sympathetic response to the appeal of the Brahmans of Kashmir was, evidently, the cause of great mental disturbance for the fanatic-minded officials of Emperor Aurangzeb. The Emperor was then at Hasan Abdal directing military operations against the Afghans. It was there that the proceedings of the talks or other accusations against the Guru were reported to the Emperor who issued the orders for his arrest. Contemporary or near contemporary records about the contents of the reports made to Aurangzeb by the Government officials and or by the Emperor's intelligencers are not available to solve this tangled web. The histories of the reign of Emperor and of his immediate successors are almost all silent on this topic. William Irwine tells us in his *Later Mughals* (I, 79. f. n.) that, according to Muhammed Ahsan Ijad, "Alamgir had Issued the *farman* for Teg Bahadur's arrest but the order was kept secret. He was made prisoner by Dilawar Khan *faujdar* of Sirhind when encamped near Rupar, intending to proceed to the Ganges to bathe. When brought to court, he refused to become a Muhammadan and was executed."

Unfortunately the Sikh sources of information on the subject are very unsatisfactory. Fact and fiction are so inextricably woven by hagiographical poets and epic writers into the details of the Guru's journey to and imprisonment at Delhi, and about his martyrdom there, that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get at the truth.

It is an undeniable historical fact that Emperor Aurangzeb was not then at Delhi. He had left Delhi for Hasan Abdal on the north-western frontier of the Panjab on Muharram 11, 1085 al-Hijri (April 7, 1674) and had returned thereto on Muharram 22, 1087 al-Hijri (March 27, 1676), four and a half months after the Guru's martyrdom. Therefore, the account of the personal interviews of the Guru with Emperor Aurangzeb at Delhi falls off as unhistorical interpolation. This, however, does not in any

way belittle the significance and historicity of the great event of martyrdom for the sake of *dharm*—*dharm het saka* as Guru Gobind Singh puts it. Shorn of imaginary accretions, which had been a great deal responsible for the element of doubt about it, the story presents itself in clear historical perspective.

The report to the Emperor evidently complained of the Guru collecting large numbers of people around him and of espousing the cause of the Brahmans against his declared policy of converting them to Islam. To this was added that the Guru's disciples addressed him as *Sacha Padshah*, the True King, which was misinterpreted as an indication of his hostile political attitude towards the Mughal Government. This was enough to excite the suspicious-natured Aurangzeb to issue an order to the Governor of Lahore for the Guru's arrest. He was arrested at Malikpur near Rupar by Nawab Dilwar Khan *faujdar* of Sirhind and was sent to Delhi where, under the orders of the Emperor, he was fettered and detained in prison.

According to William Irvine, "One of the Guru's crimes, in the Emperor's eyes, may have been the style of address adopted by his disciples, who had begun to call their leader *Sacha Padshah* or the 'True King'. This title was readily capable of a double interpretation; it might be applied as occasion served in a spiritual or a literal sense. It was extremely likely to provoke the mistrust of a ruler even less suspicious by nature than Almgir" (p.i. 79).

The words *Sacha Padshah* used for Guru Tegh Bahadur as a title could not be interpreted in a literal sense. In truth, they had no such sense at all. They had not been used for the first time for Guru Tegh Bahadur. They had been in common use in Sikh theological parlance from the days of the earlier Gurus. Guru Arjan, the fifth-Guru, had used them in *Slokās* for great divine friend, the king of kings, as *Sajjan Sacha Padshah*, *Sir Shahande Shah* (*Slok V*, 22). During the days of Guru Hargobind, we find in *Dabistaan-i-Mazahib* that they were used for Gurus also in the same sense as *Satguru*, True Teacher, the great master *Sikhan chun Guru ha ra Sacha Padshah yani badshah-i-haqiqi midanand, gumashta-i- shah ra*

masnad mi-goind wa Ramdas niz mi namand-

But spiritual interpretation, which was the real and true interpretation did not serve the occasion of the Guru's arrest. The words *Sacha Padshah*, therefore, were misinterpreted by the officials in literal sense to the Emperor saying that the Guru and his disciples had an evil eye upon his kingdom and that he should be got rid of before he became a source of danger and sallied forth in a hostile manner '*Kharuj namayand*.'

The last clause occurs in the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin* of Munshi Sayyed Ghulam Hussain Khan (1781-82) published in 1786. The translations of this work by M. Raymond *Nata-manus*, pub. 1789, 1902 and by John Briggs, 1832, have been extensively used by historians. But at times these translations run quite wide of the mark and have come to do great injustice to the subject they deal with. This is particularly the case with the account of the Sikhs where the author's anachronism has also conspired with the translation to worsen the situation.

On pages 84-85 of Vol. I, Raymond says that "Tyghbahaddy, who was of such an extraordinary character as drew multitudes after him, all which as well as their leader went always armed. This man finding himself at the head of so many thousands of people, became aspiring." Briggs improves upon 'aspiring' and says: "he aspired to sovereignty" (p.74). The actual words of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin* may be translated as: Tegh Bahadur, having collected many disciples (or followers) became a man of dignity (power or authority) and many thousand men moved along with him.

There is nothing in the original text to suggest that the Guru and his disciples "went always armed," and that "he aspired to sovereignty." In fact, sayyyed Ghulam Hussain himself at the end of his statement about Guru Tegh Bahadur says that "the companions of Tegh Bahadur moved about like mendicants. The wearing of swords and arms was not practised (or customary) among them".

Then the author of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin* introduces into the subject one Hafiz Adam, a faqir of the sect of the disciples of Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind, and says:

"...And he united his concerns with one Hafyz-aadam,

a Musulman fakir, and one of those that styled themselves of Sheh-amed-serhindi's fraternity. These two men no sooner saw themselves followed by multitudes, implicitly addicted to their chief's will, than forsaking every honest calling they fell a subsisting by plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of Pendjab; for whilst Tygh-bahadyr was levying contributions upon the Hindus, Hafyz-aadam was doing the same upon the Mussulmen." [Raymond, i 85]

In addition to this being an exaggerated and wrongful translation of the text of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkirin*, it is historically untenable, as contradicted by facts. In the first place there could have been no combination between Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, living in the Panjab 1674-75 and Hafiz Adam lying in his grave of Medina in far off Arabia since December 1643 (Shawwal 1053 al-Hijri). Shaikh Hafiz Adam, had been ordered out of the country by Emperor Shah Jahan on the recommendation of Sadullah Khan and he had left for Mecca. This was during the time of Guru Hargobind (1606-1645) who was followed by two more Gurus Har Rai (1645-1661) and Guru Har Krishan (1661-64). Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-75) came to *gaddi* in 1664, twenty one years after the death of Shaikh Hafiz Adam. This is borne out by innumerable works like *Rauzat-u-Oavumia*, *Mirat-i-Jam-i-Jahan-numa*, *Tazkirat-ul-Abidin*, *Tazkirah-i-Auliya-i-Hind-o-Pakistan*, etc., etc., referred to by Dr Saiyad Athar Abbas Rizvi and Dr. Gurcharn Singh Anand.

The allegation of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkirin*, that, like Shaikh Hafiz Adam, Guru Tegh Bahadur had also taken to the habit of taking and extracting money by force from the Hindus is meaningless on the very face of it. The Guru travelled through the Malwa territory purely for missionary work and was not accompanied by any large permanent group of disciples. During his movement from one place to another his disciples and admirers naturally turned out in large numbers to bid him farewell, while people from the next village came in equally large numbers to receive him. This apparently was either misunderstood or misrepresented by interested reporters as large crowds. On his arrival at his destination, his disciples, as was the practice among the Sikhs, made voluntary offerings to him in cash and kind as a mark

of respect for him. This practice is still followed by the faithful whenever they visit a congregation presided over by Guru the *Guru Grānth Sahib*. To use the words *akhz-o-jarr* for such voluntary offerings is very unfortunate, if not atrocious. To call it the collection of *daswandh*, one tenth of the income expected to be paid by the Sikhs for *Guru di golak*, the common fund of the community, is also not correct. The Guru never went out to collect this fund him self. This was either done by the *masands* on behalf of the Guru as mentioned in the *Dabistan* and was paid to them by the Sikhs on their own accord, or was brought to the Guru by the Sikhs themselves during their visits to the Guru on the occasion of Baisakhi or otherwise.

There is not a word in the original text of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhhirin* to justify the translation by Raymond and by John Briggs, who in most cases has only copied Raymond, that Guru Tegh Bahadur "forsaking every honest calling... fell a subsisting by plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of Panjab." The addition of the words 'The other face booter' to 'Tygh-bahadyr' is exclusively Raymond's own, blindly copied by John Briggs without referring to the text which only says : *Tegh Bahadur ra griftah muqaiyad o mahbus darand*. It may be safely inferred from this that the author of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhhirin* at the time of writing highly prejudiced against the sikhs who had during the sixties and seventies of the eighteenth century, liberated the whole of the province of the Panjab from the Mughals and the Durrani, for whom Sayyid Ghulam Hussain Khan naturally had a sympathetic political regard as his co-religionists. Guru Tegh Bahadur, otherwise was purely a spiritual leader with a detached view of life, having no militarist tendencies or political inclination. As has been affirmed by the Sayyid himself, "the wearing of swords and arms was not customary among the Sikhs" during the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur and had been introduced as the necessary part of their accountments by Guru Gobind Singh a quarter of a century later, the allegation that his movements in the country were a source of danger to the empire is meaningless and stands self-contradicted.

Having been cleared of all the wrongful charges of

political and criminal nature, trumped up against Guru Tegh Bahadur by interested officials or intelligencers, his execution remains based on his sympathy with the Brahmans of Kashmir against the official policy for their conversion to Islam. Under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb issued to the governor of Lahore he was arrested by Nawab Dilwar Khan, faujdar of Sirhind and was sent to Delhi for imprisonment. Over three months' time was taken in the exchange of communications between Delhi and Hasan Abdal where the Emperor was busy making arrangement for the conduct of military operations against the Afghans. The final orders were received at Delhi in the first week of November 1675.

To frighten the Guru into submission, two of his devoted Sikhs, Matidas and Diala were done to death before his very eyes. While Matidas was bound between two pillars and his body was sawn in twain, Diala was boiled to death in a cauldron of water. But as no fear or favour offered by the Mughal nobles could prevail upon the Guru to renounce his faith and accept Islam, he, as Muhammad Ahsan Ijad tells us, was executed in the Chandni Chowk on November 11 (Maghar Sudi 5, 1732 Vikrami). This did Guru Tegh Bahadur lay down his life as a martyr at the altar *dharma* he gave up his life but surrendered not the conviction of his heart. This was in keeping with the spirit of the fifth Nanak Guru Arjan who had accepted to be tortured to death in defence of his faith and was the first martyr to the Sikh-panth.

Just as the martyrdom of Guru Arjan had given impetus to Guru Hargobind to leap forward towards the transformation of the Sikh people into a militant church, the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur enthused the tenth Guru Gobind Singh to see it come to fruition.

The plan, as we have seen, had been chalked out and the ground prepared for it by Guru Nanak. It had been furrowed and cleared of its weeds by his three successors. Guru Arjan had watered it with his blood, The seed had been sown by Guru Hargobind. The crop had been protected by the seventh and eighth Gurus and was nourished by Guru Tegh Bahadur, again with his blood. Thus the Sikh community had passed through all the stages required for its growth to full stature. It was reserved for Guru Gobind Singh to give it the final shape. He not only freed it completely from

the Brahmanical shackles of 'keep away [and touch me not] caste and creed, but also placed all its members, including the Guru himself, on an equal level through the ceremony of *Khande da Amrit*.

The teachings of his predecessors and the unique examples of martyrdom had, of course, elevated the spirits of the Sikhs. But the old shackles had not yet been completely broken. This had hindered the growth of a homogeneous well-knit class of people inspired by a common national ideal. In fact, the idea of nationalism had not yet been born in the country. The abolition of old differences and prejudices of high and low could only be brought by a radical reformer as Guru Gobind Singh proved to be. The first thing to do, the Guru felt, was to change the psychology of the people. This he achieved by introducing a new form of baptism—*Khane da Amrit* which not only enjoined upon the baptized Sikhs to be called the *Khalsa of Wahiguru*—the Lord's Own—with the common surname of *Singh* or lion, but also to maintain intact their original God-given form, with their hair unshorn, along with other symbols including *Kirpan* for self-defence and for the defence of the weak and helpless, and for the destruction of aggressive evil doers—*gharib ki rakhkhia, jarwane ki bhakhkhia* as declared by Guru Hargobind in his conversation with *Samarth Ramdas*.

"When Guru Gobind (Singh)," says Edmond Candler, "inaugurated the sacrament of steel he proved himself a wise and far-sighted leader. For of all material things which genius has inspired with spiritual significance steel is the truest and most uncompromising. Let humanitarians prate as they will, there never has been a race who have not been purged and refined by it. In some it is the only combater of grossness and the monster of self. To the Khalsa it gave a cause and welded them into a nation; and in the dark days of Muhammed rule in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Sikh was slain at sight and no quarter was given, it drove them on those gallant crusades in which they rode to Amritsar in the dead of night, leapt into the sacred tank and out again, and galloped back through the enemies' lines purified. Hundreds were slain, but not one abjured his faith or perjured his soul to preserve 'his muddy vesture of decay.'"

[*The Mantle of the East*, p. 120—21]

The *Amrit* ceremony, in itself, was a great socio-religious leveller. The novices coming together without any distinction of cast and creed were required to drink the sugared water, stirred with a double-edged sword, from one and the same vessel in a double round, the first man becoming the last in the second round.

But the most surprising thing in this ceremony came when Guru Gobind Singh begged of the first baptized-five, popularly known as *Panj Pyare*, that he might as well be baptized in the same form and manner. The initiation of a *Guru* by his disciples was a thing unknown in the history of religions. Guru Gobind Singh, However, wished to be baptized as one of them, adopting the same form and wearing the same symbols as had been prescribed for the new dispensation. And, he offered to submit himself to the same discipline as had been laid down for the *Khalsa*. He was of the *Khalsa*, he said, and the *Khalsa* was the very breath of his life, nay his very self. In complying with the wishes of the master, the *Panj Pyare* assumed the role of the *Guru* and formally baptized him into the fold of the *Khalsa*, the *Singhs*. Well has this strange phenomenon been acclaimed by a contemporary poet Bhai Gurdass II :

Waih pargateo mard agammra waryam ikela

Wah, wah Gobind Singh, ape Gur chela.

And lo ! there appeared an unsurpassable man; wonderful, wonderful is Guru Gobind Singh, a unique hero, a venerable preceptor as well as a humble disciple. (*Var xli-17*)

This was not only a practical demonstration of the humility of the *Guru's* mind and of the equality between man and man as preached by the founder-master, the first *Guru Nanak*, but also of the spirit of democratization in socio-religious institutions of the Sikhs, of which we have innumerable examples in the post-Guru period, particularly in the observance of *Gurmata* during the days of the Sikh *Misals*.

Yet another great example of the humility of *Guru Gobind Singh's* mind. Some of his devotees called him *avtar*, an incarnation of God, May, God Himself. This was against the spirit and teachings of Sikhism which inculcated

the Oneness of Self-existent, Unborn and Formless Creator. Therefore, with all the emphasis at this command, the Guru protested against this heretic blasphemy and declared in unmistakable terms :

Jo ham ko parameshar uchar hai.

Te Sabh nark-kund meh par hai.

Mo ko das tavan ka jano.

Ya meh bhed na ranch pachchano.

Main hon param purkh ko dasa.

Dekhan ayo jagat tamasa. (*Bachittar Natak*, vi, 32-3.)

Those who call me God, shall all fall in the pit of hell. Consider me a slave of His and have no doubt I am but a slave of the Lord, come to see the spectacle of the world.

Guru Gobind Singh had no selfish political aims in his creation of the *Khalsa*. He only wished to build up a nation out of the oppressed and suppressed people of his country. But the rulers of the time, the priest-ridden Hindu Hill Rajas of the Shivalaks and the power-mad great Mughal of Delhi, saw in the socio-religious integration of the *Khalsa* a danger to their power. Of their own initiative and also under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb, the Hill Rajas and the *faujdar* of Sirhind launched a regular war against the Guru who had to fight as many as fourteen defensive battles against them. Two of his sons were killed fighting in the battle of Chamkaur, while the younger two, eight and six years old, were butchered to death at Sirhind in the Christmas week of 1705. True to the spirit of their grandfather and great-great-grand father and the teachings of their faith, the tender young children stood unshaken against the tyranny of Wazir Khan, *faujdar* of Sirhind. No threats of torture and no fear of death could frighten them, nor could the promises of a comfortable future could allure them to abjure their faith. Bricked up alive and suffocated to unconsciousness, they resolutely refused to accept Islam and accepted the butcher's knife with which they were slowly done to death.

But how great and unvengeful was Guru Gobind Singh that although he had been successful in as many as twelve battles out of fourteen, he occupied not an inch of the

enemys' land, plundered not a village of theirs and carried not a man or a woman as a prisoner of war. And, he readily accepted the invitation of the dying Emperor Aurangzeb and set out for Deccan to see him for peaceful negotiations to solve the problem of the struggling Panjab. After the death of the Emperor, he would not exploit the situation created by the war of succession among his sons, but like a soldier-saint, that he was, he stood for justice and lent a helping hand to the rightful heir Prince Muazam Bahadur Shah against his usurping brother.

Towards the end of his life, Guru Gobind Singh felt that the mission of Guru Nanak's movement of Sikhism had come to be fulfilled with the establishment of the Khalsa and the finalization of the Sikh scripture with the incorporation of the ninth Guru. He therefore decided to abolish the personal Guruship and to place the community under the guidance of the Word-Master, the Holy Book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The personal Guruship had, in fact, come to be abolished on the Baisakhi Day, of 1756 Vikrami, March 30, 1699, when the Guru had offered himself to be baptized as a Khalsa by his own disciples and had surrendered himself to the same discipline as had been prescribed for them. He had then become one with the Khalsa and the distinction between the Sikhs and the Guru had virtually disappeared. He was Guru only in name. On his death-bed, he formally declared that there would be no personal Guru for the future and that *Guru Granth Sahib* would be the *Guru* for all time to come. This was in keeping with the spirit of his predecessors, Nanak I to IX, who had all un-equivocally held that the Word of the Gurus was the real Master, worthy of all reverence.

This democratic liberalization of religion, placing all authority in the hands of the *Khalsa*, with the Holy Book to guide them, influenced the life and conduct of the Sikh people who in days to come became the pioneers of freedom movement in India, establishing in the eighteenth century socialistic republics in the form of Sikh *Misals* and *panchayats* in the Panjab.

There was, however, a sharp change in the situation in the country brought about by the death of Guru Gobind

Singh. He was attacked at Nanded by the Pathans from Sirhind and he died of the stab-wound there on October 7, 1708. The murderous attack on the Guru greatly shocked his disciples, particularly Banda Singh who had come into the fold at Nanded in the last week of September. He was all fury to hear that during the reigns of Jahangir and Aurangzeb two of the Gurus and two devoted Sikhs had been done to death, while two young sons of Guru Gobind Singh had been bricked up alive and mercilessly butchered, in addition to hundreds of Sikhs killed in defensive battles. And, now, Guru Gobind Singh had also been killed by men from Sirhind. This tyranny and oppression, felt Banda Singh, was too much to be tolerated and allowed to continue. The Mughals, evidently, wished to put an end to the Sikh movement by terrorizing it with the flash of their sword. Godliness, religious catholicity and humanism had lost their meaning to them. Self-conceit and exclusiveness, and no one else had become the only maxim of their power-mad life. As they knew no language other than that of the cold steel, it was only in that language that they could be spoken to, thought Banda Singh. With the enthusiasm of a new convert, therefore, he set out for the Panjab, accompanied by five Singhs—*Panj Pyare*—and some twenty other Singhs for his guidance and assistance.

Arriving in the Panjab, Banda Singh called upon *Sri Akalpurkh ji ka (Waheguru ji ka) Khalsa* to repair to his presence fully armed to share in the glory of *Satjug* (the Golden Age of Independence and Happiness) sought to be established by him. He enjoined upon them all to observe the *rahit* (Rules of conduct) of the *Khalsa* as there in lay the grace of the Guru—*tusi Sri Akal-purkh ji ka Khalsa ho, ...Khalsa di reht rehna, ...ja Khalsa di rehit rehega, tis di Guru bahuri Karega*. (*Hukam Name*, No. 66,67, pp. 192-94). This speaks for Banda Singh's spiritual *modus operandi* in his efforts for the deliverance of his people from under the oppressive yoke of the Mughal rulers and also for his reliance on divine grace for his success. In his heart of hearts, Banda Singh felt convinced that in the great task that he had undertaken, he had been called upon by the

Almighty Deliverer Himself, and that he was only an instrument in His hands. He is reported by the royal news-writer to have said to his *Thanedar* Amar Singh of Sultanpur that he was doing that all for sake of *dharmā*—*'man in kar barae dharam namuda am—* (*Akībar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, Jamadi-ul-Awwal 7, Bahadur Shahi 4, June 23, 1710).

In November 1709, he gained his first important victory at Samana, the town of the executioner of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh's young sons. In May, 1710, he was able to reduce the capital of the *faujdar* of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, who fell fighting in the battle of Chappar-Chiri. With this, the Khalsa, under the command of Banda Singh, was able to free practically the whole of the cis-Sutlej territory, opening the way for future successes in the field, resulting in the ultimate independence of the country in due course of time.

The interested writers on the events of those days, mostly connected with the central and provincial governments, and others who have followed them blindly, have painted Banda Singh and his Sikh comrades in the darkest colours accusing them of anti-Muslim prejudices. This was not very un-natural. From their point of view, the Sikhs were rebels and were snatching away from them parts of their empire and freeing its people from their hold. And, there never has been in the world an autocrat who had willingly relinquished his power and has not levelled the wildest of charges against the rebels. But fortunately for Banda Singh, we have on record the unassailable evidence of the day-to-day reports made to the reigning Emperor by his own official new-writers though the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*. Referring to the cause of the attack on Sirhind by Banda Singh, the Jaipur news-writer at the Imperial Court in his report written some days before the battle fought at Chappar Chiri on May 12, 1710, tells us that the Sikhs under command of Banda Singh had a deep-rooted hatred for its *faujdar* Wazir Khan for the murder of the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh.

Otherwise, Banda Singh had no hatred for the Muslims

as such. In fact, after the occupation of Sirhind on May 14, 1710, the sikhs, according to the same reporter, issued such strict orders as not to permit even the killing of the single animal.

It was reported to the Emperor on Jamadi-ul-awwal 7, Bahadur Shahi 4, June 23, 1710, that the Sikh leader Banda Singh had pardoned Jan Muhammad, the *Zamindar* of Gulab Nagar, for his previous offence and had appointed him the *Zamindar* of the whole parganah. He had also called upon to bring him in Sardar Khan of Choondla after which he would accompany Banda Singh for the chastisement of Jalal Khan Afghan.

This is enough to show that Banda Singh had no anti-Muslim prejudice against any one and welcomed their co-operation in the removal of undesirable persons from positions of authority. This was in pronounced contrast with the policy of the Mughal Emperors and their government who now looked upon the entire community of the Sikhs as enemies to be killed at sight.

On receipt of the news of the fall of Sirhind and several other places to Banda Singh, Emperor Bahadur shah himself rushed to the Panjab, and on shawwal 29, 4th regnal year (1122 al-Hijri, December 10, 1710), from his camp in the neighbourhood of Lohgarh near sadhaura, directed *Bakhshi-ul-Mumalik* Mahabat Khan to issue edicts to the *faujdar*s in the neighbourhood of Shah jahanabad "to kill the worshippers of Nanak (the Sikhs) wherever they were found."

The above edict for an indiscriminate and wholesale massacre of the Sikhs, however, brought no change in Banda Singh's attitude and policy towards the Muslims. Although himself pursued from place to place, he did not wish to reduce his struggle to the level of a communal strife. His was a political struggle. He would not, therefore, impose any religious restrictions upon the Muslims as such, and they flocked to him in large numbers. The following news-item is self-explanatory :

"21st Rabi-ul-awwal, 5th regnal year (28 April, 1711)

Bhagwati Das *Harkarah*, through Hidayatullah Khan, presented to His Majesty a news-sheet reporting that the

wretched Nanak-w orshipper (Banda Singh) has his camp in the town of Kalanaur up to the 19th instant. During this period he has promised and proclaimed: "*I do not oppress the Muslims.*" Accordingly, for any Muslim, who approaches him, he fixes a daily allowance and wages, and looks after him. He has permitted them to recite *Khutba* and *namaz*. As such, five thousand Muslims have gathered round him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call-*bang* - and say their prayers — *namaz* in the army of the wretched (Sikhs)."

This is also mentioned in another news saying :—

"The wretched Guru (Banda Singh), having established himself in the town of Kalanaur, is taking into his service any Hindu or Muslim who goes to him. Five thousand Muslim horsemen have gathered and are daily increasing. Let us see what God wishes."

13th Rabi-us-Sani, 5th regnal year (20 May, 1711).

"Bhagwati Dass *Harkarah* through Hidayatullah Khan, presented to his Majesty a news sheet saying that the wretched Guru (Banda Singh) is encamped at two *kos* from the town of Batala up to the 6th Rabi-us-Sani, 5th regnal year. Ram Chand and other Sikhs, with seven thousand horse and foot, have come from the direction of Jammu hills and have joined him. Whosoever from amongst the Hindus and Muslims comes to him for service is looked after and fed. He has granted the right of booty to them. It is decided that if the (Imperial) forces come, he will oppose them; if not, they (the Sikhs) will move towards Ajmer, via Lakhi Jangal, and go to Shahjahanabab."

These and other news-letters in the collection prove beyond doubt that the struggle of Banda Singh was directed only against the tyranny of the local Mughal officials in the Panjab and that their high-handedness was resented and opposed not only by the Sikhs and Hindus, but also by Muslims who joined the rebel Sikh army of Banda Singh in their thousands to fight against the Mughal Government. They further confirm that the Muslims in the Sikh camps enjoyed full religious liberty in the performance of their Islamic rites and practices such as the *namaz* (daily prayers) and *Khutba* (religious sermons). The struggle had been

launched against the Mughal Government not because it was a Muslim Government but only because its officials were tyrannical and were hated by the people at large—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike. It was, as such, a popular struggle for the oppressed against their oppressors and not of the Sikhs against the Muslims. It is true that the Mughal Emperor, the provincial governors, *faujdars* and other high officials were Muslims by faith and that the Imperial edicts of Bahadur Shah had been issued against the entire community of the Sikhs. But, according to the *Akhbarat*, the Sikh leader Banda Singh was able to draw distinct line between the tyrannical officials and the general mass of the Muslims who were as much the citizens of the country as the Sikhs themselves.

So deep was the impact of the Guru's teachings on Banda Singh and so devoted was he to Guru Nanak—Gobind Singh that he proclaimed to have received all his power and authority through their grace and issued his coins with the following inscription:

By the grace of the True Lord is struck the coin in
the two world; the sword of Nanak is the granter of
all boons, and

Victory is of Gobind Singh, the King of Kings.

He also introduced an official seal for state documents and letters patent. It contained the following inscription expressive of his deep sense of devotion and loyalty to the Gurus.

The greatness of Guru Nanak is visible as well as invisible.

The king of the spiritual as well as the temporal world is the True Lord Himself.

This was later on changed to :

The Kettle and the Sword—symbols of service and power, Victory and ready Patronage, have been obtained from Gurus Nanak-Gobind Singh.

In addition to being a great soldier, Banda Singh was also a great political leveller and a thorough social reformer. Wherever he went, he raised the down-trodden to positions of authority and social prestige. William Irvine tells us on the authority of contemporary writers that:

"In all the parganas occupied by the Sikhs, the reversal of previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather-dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru (Banda Singh), when in a short space of time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler, with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders..... Not a soul dared to disobey an order, and men, who had often risked themselves in battle-fields, became so cowed that they were afraid even to remonstrate." (*Later Mughals*, i. 98-99.)

But the Mughal empire, with its inexhaustible resources in men and munitions of war, was too strong for the infant community of the Sikhs. Hearing of the successes of Banda Singh, Emperor Bahadur Shah rushed to the Panjab with a mammoth army, and the Sikhs were forced to vacate their conquests.. After the death of Bahadur Shah. they were once again able to re-establish their power. But, they were not destined to be free for long. In the absence of strong positions of defence and with food and supplies running short, Banda Singh and his comrades, were driven to last extremities, made prisoners and taken to Delhi. There Emperor Farrukh Siyar ordered them all, 794, to be put to the sword at the rate of a hundred a day.

The carnage began on March 5, 1716, and continued for eight days. An embassy of the East India Company consisting of John Surman, Khoja Serhand and Edward Stephenson was then present in Delhi and had seen the massacre. Writing to the Hon'ble Robert Hedges, President and Governor of fort william, Calcutta, on March 10, 1716, they said:

".....there are 100 each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has been found that not one apostatized from this new formed religion." (C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol ii part ii *Surman Embassy*, Letter

XII, pp. 120-21; A.T. Wheeler, *Early Records of British India*, 180)

The impact of the Gurus' teachings and of the martyrdoms of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur is best illustrated in the fearless composure of mind, the peaceable calmness and the stoic self-control exhibited by Banda Singh during the last moments of his life. Under the orders of Emperor Farrukh Siyar issued on the morning of 29th Jamadi-us-Sanis, 5 Farrukh Siyari 1128 al-Hijri, June 9, 1716, to Ibrahim-ud-Din Khan, *Mir-i-Atish* and Sarbrah Khan *Kotwal*, Banda Singh, his young son, and his remaining Sikh companions were taken out of the Tripolia Jail in the Imperial fort, and were paraded, through the streets of Delhi before they were taken to the *dargah* of Khawaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiar Kaki for execution. There, near the water *sabil* of Khoja Fattoo, the executioners at first hacked his son to pieces and thrust his quivering heart into the mouth of Banda Singh who remained unmoved, completely resigned to the will of God. Then came his own turn. First of all, he was deprived of his right eye and then of his left. Then his hands and feet were cut off, his flesh was torn with red hot pincers, and finally his head was chopped off. During all these tortures, Banda Singh remained calm and serene and, in the word of the Hon'ble mountstuart Elphinstone, he "died with unshaken constancy, glorying in having been raised up by God to be a scourge to the iniquities and oppressions of the age (*History of India—The Hindu and Mahometan Periods*, p. 686). Sayyed Ghulam Hussain Khan tells us in the *Siyyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin* seemingly on the authority of Muhammad Hashim Khan, popularly known as Khafi Khan, that while Banda Singh was being tortured to death, *Itmad-ud-Daulah* Muhammad Amin Khan was surprised at the nobleness of his features and addressed him saying: "It is surprising that one who shows so much acuteness in his features and so much of nobility in his conduct, should have been guilty of such horrors." With the greatest composure, he replied: "I will tell you, whenever man become so corrupt and wicked as to relinquish the path of equity and to abandon themselves to all kinds of excesses, then the providence never fails to raise up a scourge

like me to chastise a race so depraved; but when the measure of punishment is full, then he raises up men like you to bring him to punishment." *Siyar-ul-Mutakhhirin*, 403; Raymond 1. 91; Briggs, 79-80; *Muntakhb-ul-Lubab*, ii, 766-67.

Although the successes of Banda Singh were but temporary, there was revolution effected in the minds of the Sikhs, of which history often fails to take notice. A will was created in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for a national cause. The example set by Banda Singh and his companions, under the impact of the lives and teachings of the Gurus was to serve as a beacon-light in the dark days to come. The idea of a nation and a national state became a living aspiration, and although suppressed for a time by relentless persecution, it went on working underground like a smouldering fire and came out forty years later with a fuller effulgence, never to be suppressed again.

The history of the Sikhs, from the fall of Banda Singh in 1716 to the establishment of Sikh power in the Panjab in 1764-65, is a record of titanic struggle of the Khalsa against the Mughals and the Durranis. In it, the sons of the Land of the Five Rivers had not only to fight for their very existence but were also able, after long and determined suffering, to assert their right to rule over their homeland as an independent sovereign people.

After the execution of Banda Singh, the Mughal government took every measure not only to destroy the power of the Sikhs but also to extirpate the community as a whole. The edict of Emperor Bahadur Shah was repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar in almost the same words, says the *Miftah-ut-Tawarikh*, that the men of this sect wherever found may be unhesitatingly killed—*har ja kih in firqa ra yaband, ba t'ammal bi-kushand* (p. 398). Money reward was also offered for the head of every Sikh brought to Lahore, dead or alive. The death of Farrukh Siyar in September 1719 gave the Sikhs some respite. But with the appointment of Zakariya Khan Bahadur as governor of Lahore in 1726, the situation became worse than before. He seemed determined 'to exterminate the whole nation of the Sikhs.' He sent out moving columns in all directions to hunt them out, and in

hundreds 'they were daily brought in chains and executed in the streets of Lahore.' They were tortured in different ways—broken on the wheel, flayed alive or cut up limb by limb. But nothing could deter them from their resolve. They were pledged to free their land from Mughal domination and nothing short of it could satisfy them. Driven from their homes and hearths, they had to seek shelter in jungles and deserts. There, they organized themselves into *Buddha* and *Taruna Dals* for a 'win or die struggle.' The *Taruna Dal* was soon sub-divided into five *jathas* to provide its energetic leader with greater opportunities of service and fewer of friction.

The activities of the *Dals* alarmed the government and they renewed their policy of persecution with much greater vigour, with thousands of Sikhs falling under the executioner's sword, including a revered saint and scholar of the time, Bhai Mani Singh, who was hacked to pieces, joint by joint, at Lahore on June 24, 1734. The entry of the Sikhs into their temple and tank at Amritsar was banned and sentries were posted all round the city to watch out for them. But these oppressions failed to subdue them. Every individual Sikh, wherever he was, considered himself to be a standard-bearer of the Khalsa and a proclamation of the existence of his people. Singly or in groups, they shot out with vengeance, whenever they found an opportunity to visit their sacred temple. Some performed their pilgrimage in secret, and in disguise, but in general, according to a contemporary Muhammedan author, says John Malcolm in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812), "The Sikh horsemen were seen riding, at full gallop, towards their favourite shrine of devotion. They were often slain in making this attempt, and sometimes taken prisoners; but they used, on such occasions, to seek, instead of avoiding, the crown of martyrdom", and the same authority states, that instance was never known of a Sikh, taken in his way to Amritsar, consenting to abjure his faith.' (p. 88).

The homeward return of King Nadir Shah of Iran from Delhi in May, 1739, laden with the riches of the Mughal Empire, provided a very favourable chance to the Sikhs in

the Shivalak Hills to relieve him of much of his booty. Surprised at this adventure, Nadir Shah enquired from Nawab Zakariya Khan about the people who had dared to rob the conqueror of Delhi. "They are a group of *Faqirs* who visit their Guru's tank (at Amritsar) twice a year and bathing in it disappear," replied Zakariya Khan Bahadur. "But where do they live?" was the next question of Nadir Shah. "Their homes are the saddles of their horses," was the reply. "Beware of them, then," Nadir Shah warned Zakariya Khan, "the day is not distant when these rebels will raise their heads and take possession of this country," (Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Zikar-i-Guruan wa Singhan*, etc., p. 13). The prophecy of Nadir Shah came out to be true in a quarter of a century when the Sikhs became the Masters of country in 1764-65.

The remarks of Nadir Shah cut Zakariya Khan to the quick and he launched an all-out campaign against the Sikhs which continued with relentless vigour during the governorships of his sons Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan (1745-48) and of Nawab Muin-ul-Mulk popularly known as Mir Mannu (April 1748-November 1753). The son and successor of Zakariya, Yahiya Khan, says Sayad Muhammad Latif in his *History of the Panjab*, ordered a thousand Sikhs brought in irons to Lahore by his minister Diwan Lakhpat Rai from the north-east of province to be executed at the *Nakhas Khana*—later known as *Shahidganj*. "The scene of execution is marked," continues the Sayad; "by a *samadh* or shrine, erected in honour of Bhai Taru Singh, the chief martyr, and an old companion of Gobind Singh, who though offered a pardon on condition of his faith and consenting to have his long hair cut, persistently refused and was thereupon beheaded, 1746 A.D." (p.213). Under a proclamation of Yahiya Khan, "Death was to be the punishment of all persons who invoked the name of Guru Govind and a reward was offered for the heads of Sikhs." "Thousands were put to death daily and their heads brought before the *subedar* of Lahore for reward". (*ibid*).

The internecine quarrels between Yahiya and his brother Shah Nawaz, followed by the invasion of Ahmad

Shah Durrani of Afghanistan, gave the Sikhs a chance to emerge out of their hide-outs, take possession of Amritsar and raise in the neighbourhood of the sacred temple on the Baisakhi day of (March 29) 1748, a small enclosure of mud walls called *Ram Rauni* after the name of Guru Ram Das. This was later on known as *Ramgarh*.

But the Khalsa had yet to wade through a few more pools of their blood during the days of Mir Mannu before they emerged finally triumphant in their mission of liberation. Mir Mannu not only deputed his subordinates to round up the Sikhs in different parts of the country, but, at times, he himself also rode out for the hunt and brought in a large bag of the Sikhs. According to Sayad Muhammad Latif, "hundreds of Sikhs were brought daily to Lahore and butchered at the *Nakhas* or *Shahidganj*, outside the Delhi gate in sight of multitude of spectators." Finding the homes of the Sikhs depleted of men, their women and children were seized and taken to Lahore to be imprisoned in the dark and narrow dungeons in the compound of Shahidganj, where little babes were cut to pieces and placed in the laps of their mothers. So horrible and unforgettable were the atrocities perpetrated there that they are still remembered by the Sikhs in their *ardas*. But they failed to produce any adverse effect upon the Sikhs of those days who smiled them away in a song of bravado, saying :

Manno asadi datri, asin Manno de soy,

Jion jion Manno wadh-da asin doon sawae hoe.

that is.

Manno is our sickle,

And we are a crop for him to mow,

The more he cuts us, the more we grow.

And this was literally true. The blood of Sikh martyrs helped raise a bumper crop of volunteers to join the ranks of the *Dul Khalsa* and die for the cause of *dharma*—the liberation of their motherland. After the death of Mir Mannu, the Sikhs had to fight against two powers—the Mughals to the south of the Sutlej and the Afghans on the north, where Ahmad Shah Durrani had established his sway.

Druing one of his *Shikars* of the Sikhs, on November 2, 1752, hunter Mannu was brought down by the mightier hunter Death, having been dragged along the earth by his frightened horse. The leaders of the Dal Khalsa, then under the command of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, foiled the attempts of Mughlani Begum, the widow of Mir Mannu, Khwaja Ubaidullah and Adina Beg Khan, to maintain themselves at Lahore, and drove away the Afghans from the Land of the Five Rivers. On February 5, 1762, the Sikhs were taken unawares by Ahmad Shah Durrani near the village of Kup and Rahira and they lost over ten thousand lives, mostly women, children and old men. This fearful carnage is known as *Wadda Ghalughara*, the Great Holocaust. This, however, failed to depress them. It rather added to their determination and fury. In April-May, they were up in arms again and were able to inflict defeats upon Zain Khan of Sirhind, and upon the Shah himself at Amritsar in October of the same year. A big memorable victory, however, was gained by the Khalsa at Sirhind on January 14, 1764, the third anniversary of the Battle of Panipat, when Zain Khan was killed in the battle and the whole of the territory to the south of the Sutlej was freed from the Afghan domination.

In the winter of 1764, Ahmad Shah rushed upon the Punjab for the seventh time to re-establish his sway but had to return disappointed. The Sikhs had by then taken possession of most of the country. But the history of the Sikhs is grateful to Qazi Nur Muhammad of Gunjaba who had accompanied the Shah during this invasion and has left to us an account thereof in his *Jang Namah*. With pen in hand and sword hanging by his side, he was present in all the Shah's engagements with the Sikhs and has recorded his own first-hand impressions of their character and fighting qualities. In his intense hatred for them as the opponents of the Afghan power in the Panjab, he uses all sorts of abusive language and calls them 'accursed infidels', 'dogs of hell', etc. But he pays a glowing tribute to the Sikh spirit of self-sacrifice in the cause of their religion and religious places. As an eye-witness, he tells us :

When the Shah arrived at the Chakk (Amritsar and entered the Darbar Sahib on Decemer 1, 1764) there was not a single *Kafir* (Sikh) to be seen there. But a few of them had remained in an enclosure (the *Bunga* of the *Akal Takhat*) so that they might spill their own blood. And they sacrificed their lives for the Guru. When they saw the renowned Shah and the army of Islam (numbering about thirty-six thousand) they all came out of the enclosure. They were only thirty in number. They had not a grain of fear in them. They had neither the fear of slaughter nor the dread of death.

Na kardand yak zarrah-i-tars bak

Na khafezi qatl o na beem az halak.

Thus (unmindful of the overwhelming strength of the Shah's army) they grappled with the *Ghazis*, and in grappling they spilt their own blood. All of them were killed. (*Jang Namah*, xxv, 48-55, p. 100)

Qazi Nur Muhammad was so deeply impressed by the lofty character and bravery of the Sikhs in their struggle for freedom that he has devoted a section of his book, No. XLI, pp. 156-59, to *Bayan-i-mardangi-i-sagan waqt-i-jang-i-Din wa mardangi-i-oshan—The Bravery of the Dogs in a Religious war and in General*—where in he says :

Do not call the 'dogs' (the Sikhs) *Dogs*, because they are lions, and are courageous like lions in the field of battle. How can a hero, who roars like a lion in the field of battle, be called a *dog* ? If you wish to learn the art of war, come face to face with them in the field. They will demonstrate it to you in such a way that one and all will praise them for it. If you wish to learn the science of war, O swordsman, learn from them how to face an enemy like a hero and to get safely out of an action. *Singh* is a title a form of address for them. It is not justice to call them *dogs*. If you do not know the Hindustani language (I tell you that) the word *Singh* means a *lion*. Truly they are like lions in battle and at the time of peace, they surpass Hatim (in generosity).

When they take the Indian sword in their hands, they overrun the country from Hind to Sind. Nobody then stands in opposition to them, however much strong he may be. When they manipulate the spear, they shatter the ranks

of the enemy, and when they raise the heads of their spears into the sky; they would pierce even through the Caucasus. When they adjust the strings of their *Chachi* bows and place in them the enemy-killing arrows and pull the string to their ears, the body of the enemy begins to shiver with fear. When their battle-axe falls upon the armour of their opponents, that armour becomes their coffin.

The body of every one of them is like the piece of a rock, and, in physical grandeur, every one of them is more than fifty persons. It is said that Bahram Gore killed wild asses and set the lions shrieking. But if Bahram were to come face to face with them, even he would bow before them.

During a battle when they take their guns in their hands, they come jumping into the field of action, roaring like lions. They tear the chests of many and shed the blood of several (for their enemy) in the dust. It is said that the musket is a weapon of the ancient days. It, however, appears to be the creation of these dogs rather than of the great Socrates. Although there are so many of the *tufangchis* (musketeers), but nobody can excel them in its use. To the right and to the left, and in front and towards the back, they go on firing regularly. If you do not believe in what I say, you may enquire of the brave swordsmen who would tell you more than myself and would praise them for their fighting. The fact that they grappled with thirty thousand heroes bears witness to my statement.

If their armies take to flight, do not take it as an actual flight. It is a war tactic of theirs. Beware, beware of them for a second time. The object of this trick is that when the furious enemy runs after them, he is separated from his reinforcements. Then they turn back to face their pursuers and set fire even to water . . .

Leaving aside their mode of fighting, hear you another point in which they excel all other fighting people. In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put an obstance in the way of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of a woman, be she a well-to-do lady or a maid-servant. There is no adultery amongst these

dogs, nor are these mischievous people given to thieving. Whether a woman is young or old, they call her a *Buddhiya*. In the Indian language *Buddhiya* means "an old lady." There is no thief at all amongst these dogs, nor is there any house-breaker born amongst these miscreants. They do not make friends with adulterers and house-breakers . . .

If you are not conversant with their religion, I tell you that the Sikhs are the disciples of the *Guru*, and that august *Guru* lived at Chak (Amritsar). The ways and manners of these people received their impetus from Nanak who shewed these Sikhs a separate path (taught them a distinct religion). He was succeeded by Govind Singh. From him they received the title of *Singh*. They are not from amongst the Hindus. These miscreants have a separate religion of their own. (Section XLI, pp. 156-59).

Any people could feel rightly proud of such a praise. But, as it comes from the bitterest enemy of the Sikhs, who had shattered for all time to come the hopes and ambitions of the Afghans to establish their political power in the Punjab, and of the writer himself to be appointed as the Qazi at Lahore, it enhances its historical value for the Sikhs a thousand times.

On April 10, 1765, the Khalsa celebrated the Baisakhi at the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, and there by a *Gurmata* of the *Sarbat Khalsa* decided to march upon Lahore, the traditional capital of the Panjab. With the co-operation of some Muslim friends, the Sikh Sardars were successful in occupying the fort of Lahore on the night of April 16, and, on the morning of the 17th, the city was also occupied. Thus was the mission of the Khalsa fulfilled and the whole of the Panjab was liberated from under the foreign yoke, and her people heaved a sigh of relief. "With the coming in of the Singhs," says the author of the *Umdat-u-Tawarikh*, "people felt extremely happy like birds and fowls freed from their cage, and the reign of peace and prosperity came to the whole of the country" (pp. 163-64).

In keeping with the Sikh spirit of service which they had inherited from their ancestors under the impact of the Gurus' teachings, and in acknowledgment of all their achieve-

ment as gifts from them, the Misaldar Sardars unanimously selected for their common coin the following inscription borrowed from the seal of Banda Singh and the coin of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia :

**Deg O Tegh O Fateh O Nusrat bedirang
Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.**

The same inscription was adapted by Maharaja Ranjit Singh for the coins of the integrated kingdom of the Panjab.

GURU NANAK DEV AND A NOTE ON HIS JAPU

delivered by
S. KAPUR SINGH

Lecture I

GURU NANAK : HIS PLACE IN HISTORY

I

Nanak, who came to be universally known as, the *Guru*, the Light of Mankind, was born on April 15, 1469 A.D., in a small village, called, Talwandi Bhoi, situated in the alluvial barren tract, called *Bar*, the area now comprised mostly by the Sheikhpura district of the West Panjab and the south western portion of the Lahore district. The village, Talwandi Bhoi, is situated at a distance of about 50 kilometers to the south west of the town of Lahore and it was renamed, Nānkānā Sahib, by *Māhārājā* Kaura Mal who constructed holy tanks and memorial gurdwaras in this deserted village in 1750.¹ The extensive lands bequeathed to the monuments and the memorial gurdwaras sacred to the memory of Guru Nanak by *Maharaja* Kaura Mal continued to be a part of the estate of the gurdwaras at Nankana Sahib till 1947 when partition of India assigned Nankana Sahib to Pakistan. The father of Nanak was a Patwari, revenue overseer and accountant appointed by the feudal chief of the village, Rai Bular, who was originally a high caste Hindu of *Bhatti Rajput* clan, it seems, recently converted to Islam under the pressure and duress of the times. The life of Nanak is contained in the *Janam Sakhis*, two of which are now extant. The earlier account, known as, *Walait Wali Janam Sakhi* on account of a partial recension of it having

1. This Maharaja Kaura Mal was a sahadhari, probationer Sikh, and was appointed the Governor of the Multan Province by Mir Muinul Malik, known as, Mir Mannu, to the Sikh chronicles. Mir Mannu became the subehdar of the Lahore satarapy in 1748. He is notorious in Sikh chronicles as the most vicious enemy of the Sikh who pursued as his main state policy, the complete genocide of the Sikh people by organised wholesale and ruthless massacres.

been recovered from a manuscript in British Museum in London half a century ago, initially retrieved by a British military officer from the personal kit of a Sikh soldier slain on the battlefield of Gujrat (1848), contains a less imaginative and more realistic account of Nanak's life than the other and popular *Janam Sakhi*, called *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, which latter is manifestly inspired by the Buddhist *Jatak* Tales, usually described as histories of the previous lives of the Buddha, though this description is inadequate. Many of these *Jatak* tales, are folklore tales far older than Buddhism, and which represent the deposit of esoteric story of the evolution of human religious dimension down from the animal instinctual structure to the human awareness.

2. These recorded accounts of Nanak's life, more often than not, strike as bad history and confused legend to modern mind familiarised only with rational and objective semantic tradition as the only respectable verbal mode of expression and as a consequence, even many Sikh Scholars describe these basic records and testaments of the Guru's *Life*, as excessively imaginative, puerile and unworthy of acceptance by 'scientific' and 'objective' minds. It is not so, because, it is not the *Janam-Sakhis* that falsify the Guru's profile but a failure of comprehension of their idiom that confuses the modern European and the Sikh scholar as to the delineation and portrayal of a human being, Guru Nanak, who is eviscerated of his true personality the moment he is squeezed and distorted into the mould of a 'historical Nanak' as distinct and wholly separated from what these 'scholars' designate as the 'legendary Nanak'. This failure of comprehension has twin roots: (1) European literary tradition delights in generalising and in the abstract and the impersonal while the genius of almost all the oriental languages i. e. their pre-19th century morphological organisms, is personal, particular and concrete, where the folklore narrative attempts to communicate the universal concepts as informing a concrete historical person and occurrence. (2) The, so called, 'historical Nanak' that is sought to be churned out by modern scholars, the European as well as the Sikh, on deeper thought, is seen to be a person, who demonstrably is not the Nanak born

in 1469 A. D. at the village, Talwandi Rai Bhoi, and who gave birth to the historical upsurge and movement known to History as, Sikhism. This distilled 'historical Nanak' is clearly seen as a mere emotionalised intellectual who said this and did that such as many others of his contemporaries, predecessors and those who followed had said or done but who crossed the desert of life and history to vanish beyond the Skyline, without leaving tell-tale footsteps and beckoning footpaths involving future generations of mankind into new modes of impulse and behaviour such as *the* Guru Nanak did. The 'historical Nanak' of our 'scholars', therefore, is not *the* Guru Nanak whose portrayal is attempted by our profound literary *genre*, the *Janam Sakhis*, but a mere type, a denominator of what the individual Nanak might have been, had he not been *the* Guru Nanak. These 'Scholars,' thus, by piecing together carefully and laboriously selected passages from these existing documents and by checking them with tradition and historical monuments which sprang up soon after the conclusion of the earthly career of the Guru Nanak, give a connected and 'objective' story of his life. As the years rolled by and as the formative impulses Nanak had fashioned and released amongst the people assumed concrete social and political shape in the form of the Sikh nation, incidents of Nanak's life acquired an evergrowing vivid halo and aura of reverence surcharged with primal significance so that miracle and heavenly assistance, where seen and recognised as an integral part of Guru Nanak's life story. Such a process is always an evidence of the magnitude and the extent of the spiritual forces released by the personality of an individual and actualised in the destiny of a people. Besides, it is a higher and poetic form of history designed to lift the prosaic, personal, impermanent but, nevertheless, the true story of that individual to a plane above the accident of the time and the space. This aspect of the *Janam Sakhis*, though requires a fuller treatment in its own right but for which the present is hardly the proper occasion, suffice it to say that it is certain that Nanak was, from the very beginning, a precocious and moody child, and as he grew up he became the despair of his matter-of-fact male parent, Mehta Kalu Ram.

He was sent to the village *patthshala* under a Brahmin teacher, from whom he learnt Arithmetic, Book-keeping and Menemonic Tables of Accountancy and reading and writing of the current *devnagri* script known as, *shastri* script, in the north western India. By all accounts, he was a very intelligent and clever pupil and soon learnt all that was to be learnt from this *pathshala*. He then went to the local *mektab*, the seminary run by a Muslim teacher, Syed Hassan, as the author of the *Siyyar-ul-Mutaakhirin* tells us. In this *mektab*, Nanak studied rudiments of Persian and Arabic and Indian Islamic literature which became the foundation of his later acquaintance with the highest religious thought then current in the Islamic World. Nanak's was a knowledge-hungry mind, and a restless soul and through self-study and dialogue he soon became at home with the ancient Hindu scriptures and the pious writings of the exponents of the Bhakti School of medieval India. He finished his education by personal discussions with the recognised teachers of various religions and itinerant *sadhus* and *faqirs* of whose company he was exceedingly fond. These educational attainments and the grounding in learning which Nanak thus acquired is amply evidenced in his revelations such as the *Japu*, the *Siddhagosti* and the *Omkar*. At the age of nine, it is recorded he was asked to participate in the Hindu ceremony of *yajnopavitam* and he took exception to the mere formality empty of its spirit, remarking that he would rather put on a thread which would "neither break, nor get soiled, nor burnt, nor destroyed," (*Var*, Asa, I). All attempts of Nanak's father to put him to some useful profession or trade failed and he became increasingly more and more moody and contemplative. The story goes that he was sent to the neighbouring market of Chuharkana with a good sum of money to conduct some sound business deal but Nanak spent this money in feeding a group of hungry mendicants, taking too literal a stand on the instructions of his father that he was to invest this money in some *sacca sauda*, 'profitable business'. The magnificent temple known as *Sacca Sauda*, now left in Pakistan, marks the spot where Nanak demonstrated how the impulse for material gain may

be transformed into a spiritual purpose. Thoroughly disappointed in the conduct of his son, *Mehta Kalu Ram* sent him to his brother-in-law, *Mehta Jai Ram Das*, to whom the elder sister of Nanak was married, at Sultanpur, now a decaying town in the former Kapurthala State on the Banks of a tributary, called, *Bein*, to the river, Beas. Jai Ram Das was an official in the court of Daulat Khan Lodhi, the Local Pathan potentate and through his influence Nanak was appointed the Custodian-General of the State Stores. He performed his duties diligently and efficiently and the previous impression that Nanak was unfit to engage himself in any profession or trade was completely removed. Here, Nanak married and two sons were born to him. But his restlessness soon had the better of the sense of security and creature-comforts which a happy home and a good job guaranteed. It was in the year 1496 A. D. when Nanak was 27 years old that, one morning, when he went to bathe in the rivulet *Bein*, as usual that, he had the unique experience of complete atunement with God, the Universal Spirit, and received the Mandate for his Ministry. The Chroniclers inform us that Nanak remained submerged in the waters of the river for three days and three nights, and he was commissioned by God Almighty to go forth into the World to praise and preach the Religion of the Name, which later came to be known as Sikhism. The God Almighty said to Nanak "I am God, the Almighty, you are the Guru-in-God", recounts *Janam Sakhi*. On emergence from the river-waters the first words that Nanak uttered are recorded as : "Neither there is a Muslim, nor a Hindu," and this utterance is at once the starting point of Nanak's teachings, as a notification of the assumption of his Ministry as the Guru, the Light and the Teacher of Mankind.² What is the significance of this event and this occurrence as comprehended by the Sikhs and epitomised in the Sikh movement ? First of all, it is a claim

2. *Guru*, etymologically, in Sanskrit, means, 'Dispeller of Darkness'. Therefore, the claim "When Guru Nanak came into the World, darkness was dispelled and there was light all around."
Bhai Gurdas, Varan

that the movement which Guru Nanak initiated is the complete and legitimate heir to the spiritual truths of the Hindu race and the Semitic races. Simultaneously, it is a proclamation that the truths that had hitherto been the property in exclusivity of the exclusively organised Peoples, the Hindus and the Muslims, were henceforth to be the property of the whole mankind, guarded by a World religion. Secondly, it was a judgement that the current exclusive and corrupted forms of the Truth believed and hugged by the races calling themselves the Hindus and Muslims were not enough and that they needed purification, further elucidation and newer interpretation before they could be accepted. The Sikh Movement, as a consequence, took over and inherited the activism, *jehad*, of Islam, along with the spirit of deep quest and profound introversion of the Hindus. Thirdly, it proclaimed the advent of a unique event, the manifestation of a particular Attribute of God, God as the Guide, with the avowed object of leading mankind from Darkness to Light, in answer to the eternal cry of human heart, paraphrased in the upanisidic text as, *tamsomajyotir gamya*, the emergence of the Guru-Principle of God, capable of being placed as a number in the series of other incarnations of God, and prophets of mankind, but in quality and historicity, unique, to be repeated in Ten Manifestations, 'ten' being the ultimate Number, not merely a peak in human evolution, but a discontinuous once-for-all initiative of God³ within the spatiotemporal order, known as the world. Fourthly, it affirmed that human life on earth is not without real significance, a mere dream or a *lila*, *qua* the human beings, but has abiding consequences for them.⁴

3. The ten *Gurus* are, in a mystic sense, one *Guru*, in one continuous manifestation. Guru Gobind Singh in his incomplete autobiography, the *Baccittarnatak*, says that those who regard ten Gurus as ten events, are in gross illusion.

4. The major impediment in understanding the true nature of Sikhism so far has been the desire to explain it as a historical phase of the Hindu religious thought of medieval India. The possibility that it may be something discontinuous and unique was deemed as basically

3. In this context it was that Guru Nanak started on his extensive journeys of the then known civilised world, of India, and Muslim Asia to preach his new religion, which at once combined the creative intuition of the Hindus and the critical intelligence of the Semitic mind and thus it is that we find the integrated co-presence of the spirit of combat and organisation and the spirit of quietist contemplation amongst the Sikhs. At this point, Guru Nanak left the Government employment and the town of Sultanpur, accompanied by a Muslim musician known as Mardana in the Sikh chronicles. For a while, he tramped over the northern Punjab. He went to Saidpur, now Aiminabad in Gujranwala District of the West Punjab, and halted at the house of a low caste carpenter, revered in Sikh history as Bhai Lalo. This in itself was a dramatically starting event, a high caste *Kshatriya*, accompanied by a low-casteless Muslim living with a low caste *sudra*, and the local Hindu prefect, or *faujdar*, Malik Bhago, called upon him to explain his conduct. Guru Nanak here publicly denounced the *Varnasramadharma* and the Hindu caste system, and declared Humanity as one social brotherhood. It was here that Guru Nanak openly preached his one of the three

Contd. from page 114]

misconceived and brushed aside, as simply impossible, or unscientific by those nurtured in the crude notions of the 19th Century dogma of evolution and Hegelian dialectics of History. The concept of Emergent Evolution, of discontinuous, and unpredictable events in the physical structure of Matter and biological process, came to be recognised only recently, while the critical thought on History and Religion still remains dominated by the old nineteenth century mechanical concepts. The following passage, as reproduced in "The Listener" London, 30th Oct., 1947 occurred in a broadcast of B.B.C. by Dr. I.A. Richards in October, 1947 :

"Here is a very odd thing. In literature, the best in each kind comes, first, comes suddenly and never comes again. This is a disturbing, uncomfortable, unacceptable idea to people who take their doctrine of Evolution, oversimply. But I think, it must be admitted to be true. Of the very greatest things in each sort of literature, the masterpiece, is unprecedented, unique, never challenged or approached henceforth".

Something analogous to this, is true of Sikh religion also.

basic tenets of Sikhism, namely that all possession of material goods and wealth, unless acquired legitimately, through honest non-exploitive creative labour, was sinful. The three basic tenets of Sikhism are, as declared by Guru Nanak (1) *Nam japo*, practice the yogic discipline of Name, (2) *Kirt karo*, engage in honest non-exploitive labour, and (3) *wand chhako*, share your earnings with others. The first tenet inculcates the necessity for spiritual *Sadhana* for the purpose of purifying and uplifting the individual soul to the full realisation of its true essence, and the *sadhana* recommended is yoga of the Name, in supersession of the difficult and involved spiritual disciplines that had been current amongst the Hindus and certain sects of Islam and other religions, entailing complete retirement from the social and wordly activity and maceration of the body and mortification of the mind. This *sadhana*, centres around the verbal repetition of the Sikh formula, *Waheguru*.⁵

4. In its deeper import and significance, this *sadhana* is a psychological discipline having remarkable points of resemblance with the system now propounded by Rishi Arvind Ghosh of pondicherry, to empty the mind of its content, of evanescent impressions and the awakening and the awareness of the "Numina" as contrasted with the phenomena of perceptions through physical sense, by the displacement of this phenomenon of *rupa* and *raga*. Thus the individual psyche becomes aware of its true essence, *svarupa*. This is the highest goal, envisaged by the highest forms of yoga. Consciousness of culture, which is the social, aspect of the spiritual awakening of people, intellectually creates its primary *numina* to sustain it. It imposes significant words, names, on forms of the culture, and conjures them, seizes or bounds them. By virtue of the *name* these "numina" are subject to the intellectual powers of the man who possesses the *name*, and the whole of philosophy and the whole of Science and everything that is related in any way to knowing, is, at the very bottom, nothing but an infinitely refined mode of applying the

5. Japu, 32, *Bhai Gurdas Vars*, 4., Santokh Singh, *Nanak-Prekash* 3 : 6.

name of that which before such application is alien and unknown and unknowable. The pronouncement of the right *name*, which in physical sciences we call, 'the concept', is, in essence, an incantation, a mantram. Deities and basic notions of science alike come into being first as vocable names, with which is linked the idea that is to become more and more definite in the consciousness. Thus alone, through the magic of the name do men become capable of knowing God, and Guru Nanak discovered this essential truth and advocated it as a true, proper and royal path to the completest fulfilment of the religious quest in man, in supersession of the ancient arduous and tortuous disciplines and *sadharas* so far prevalent and practised. This is religion in its purest sense, separated from its social and ethical content. It is the adhyatam vidya of the upanisadic sages. It is religion as implicated in its loftiest conception by the Western mind, as A.N. Whitehead defines it : "what man does with his solitariness". The second tenet namely *kirt karo* was preached by Guru Nanak to the Governor of Saidpur, Malik Bhago, by refusing to partake the luscious and luxury food offered by him to Guru Nanak, on the ground that this food had not been earned and acquired through honest, non-exploitive labour, and his possession of the food, therefore, was sinful. It is interesting to speculate on some points of apparent similarity between this ethical doctrine of Guru Nanak and the theory of 'Economic Value' propounded by Karl Marx, four centuries later. If all wealth and material possessions not acquired through honest non-exploitive labour are sinful, such possession is, by and large, morally illegitimate and unjustified also. All such possession is, essentially, usurpation and exploitation, and a just and equitable social order, therefore, should be such as to make this usurpation and exploitation impossible, and the communist basis of the social order logically follows. It is necessary to point out here, though, that an ethical justification of an economic order, of the pattern of Communism, does not, in any manner, directly justify the methods adopted in contemporary times

to establish and sustain such an economic order, such as centralisation of power, annulment of the human individuality and dictatorship. The first is a question of ethics and 'economic justice' while the second is a question of organisation and intrustment of power, i.e., political power, whether direct or indirect and there is no logical nexus between the two. It is necessary to make this distinction here, because Guru Nanak has not altogether neglected the second question, and it is clear that all achievement of power and its sustenance that is devoid of a human face or has non-human face masqueraded, is anathema to the religion of Guru Nanak, Sikhism. The third and the last tenet of Sikhism *wand chako*, carries the process further. Even the wealth which individual legitimately and through his own honest creative labour acquires must not be reserved by him for his selfish, self-centred and exclusive enjoyment. The whole community is morally entitled to the fruits of such labour, not, indeed, on the grounds of equity or 'economic justice', which are amorphous and relative concepts but on 'the ground, that no individual is spiritually complete unless he considers himself as a part of the society as a whole. The Sikh way of life, as preached by Guru Nanak, therefore, is by no means a vague religiosity but a way of believing and living revealed in the concrete stuff of history and mediated from generation to generation and through the centuries, in well-defined thoughts and practices. It is indefeasibly social, for according to Guru Nanak's teachings, no individual can, for ever, or for long, experience God without the divine society, the *sangat*, as known to the Sikhs up to the Ninth Nanak, and the *panth* into which this *sangat* was reorganised by the Tenth Nanak, which *sangat* and the *panth*, is its necessary vehicle and abiding guarantee. And in his conception of *sangat*, Guru Nanak reveals his teachings about the vexed question of the organisation and distribution of Power, which has become such a vital issue for the modern man. The source of power is the spiritually awakened individual, the *gurmukh*, and the basic unit of organisation is the *sangat*, rooted in its geographical locale. It is through the voluntary and revocable delegation of 'power' by such *sangats* that any centralisation of

power may come into being, if it has to win approval by the Sikh doctrine. This centralisation takes the form of the *Guru Sangat*, the *Guru Panth*, always subject to the Sikh doctrine *Guru bis biswe, sangat ikees biswe* i.e. The Guru is twenty parts and plenary but the *sangat* may override and veto.

5. The centralised Authority is all-powerful but is always subject to the scrutiny and control of the primary and basic units, called, the local *sangat*. Thus, neither the tyranny of the majority nor any form of dictatorship is countenanced in this scheme of organisation of 'Power.' And since each individual is an end-in-himself and each local *sangat* completely and fully sovereign, even when it has delegated its sovereignty to a centralised Authority, no question of sacrificing the individual for the State or of one generation for the next generation as is being tacitly accepted in the present day world in totalitarian regimes or 'Socialist Planning', ever arises. This scheme of organisation of 'Power' is not merely implicit in Guru Nanak's teachings; it is explicit and was demonstrated in practice, as the Sikh movement unfolded itself under the guidance of the successive Gurus.⁶

6. After appointing Bhai Lalo as his first missionary whose instructions were to go forth into the world with the tools of his trade and to make no other request to people except for a carpenter's job. While doing his job of a carpenter Bhai Lalo was to keep himself engaged in the repetition of the Name and, if and when, any soul was attracted to him on account of his honest work as a carpenter and his conduct as

6. Nanak Prakash of Bhai Santokh Singh records an interesting incident of the later days of the Guru's life, when Guru Nanak had permanently settled at Kartarpur (Ravi). Two rich and elderly gentlemen from central Punjab came to reside at the Kartarpur Farm. After a long stay there, they were so impressed by the spiritual grandeur of Guru Nanak and his teachings that they humbly petitioned that they may be permitted to spend the rest of their lives in rendering personal service to the Guru so that they may be freed from the cycle of recurrent births. "Go back, to your homes, and spend your wealth in the service of the poor, and your lives in the service of the society, and thereby you will have rendered ample service to my person; for people are paramount over the person of Guru".

ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਚਰਨਨ ਹੈ ਜਹਿਵਾਂ, ਜਮ ਸ੍ਰੀਰ ਜਾਣੀਏ ਤਹਿਵਾਂ ।

an honest labourer, it was then and then alone that, he was to preach the Sikh way of life to that soul and to impart to him the three basic tenets of Sikhism and explain, how these tenets were to be lived in practice.

7. Next, the Guru went towards Multan where he preached the good religion and the way of life that is Sikhism and then he returned back home, after staying at his home-village for a short time, he commenced his four famous 'grand-tours,' known as four *udasis*. The first *udasi* was towards the East in which he covered the important centres of Hindu religion. He visited Kurukshetra from where he passed through Panipat to Delhi and arrived at Hardwar. He preached on the way from place to place, to the individual and to the multitude, in his peculiar characteristic way. Kurukshetra, he visited at the time of the Sun-eclipse fair and to the horrifaction of the brahmins and pilgrims he started cooking meat on the bank of the holy tank at the sacred hour of the Sun-eclipse when all cooking fires must be extinguished. In the discussions that followed he explained that the doctrine of non-meat eating on the ground of meat-diet involving the taking of life was untenable since the principle of life prevailed in equal measure, throughout the animal-kingdom and the vegetable-kingdom, both. It was equally untenable on grounds of well-established, ancient tradition, for, the ancestors of the Hindus used to kill animals for sacrifices, and thirdly, that in any case, avoidance of flesh as food was impracticable and impossible so long as they used water since water was the source of all life, and 'the First life-principle.'⁷

8. At Haridwar, he stood in the holy waters of the Ganga and instead of throwing handfuls of water towards the rising sun, as other pilgrims were doing, as oblations to their ancestors residing in the *suryaloka*, Guru Nanak began to throw water towards the west, and when questioned, replied that, he was throwing water to have his newly sown grain-fields about two hundred miles away in the Punjab, irrigated. The people laughed at him pointing out that his endeavour was useless. How could his handfuls of water irrigate his fields over 200 miles away in the west. The Guru

7. ਧਰਿਲਾ ਪਾਣੀ ਜੀਉ ਹੈ। *Var Asa*.

rejoined : "In the same way in which you expect your water to reach your ancestors millions of miles away in the *suray-loka*", and the Guru had made his point. From Hardwar, Guru Nanak went to Kashi, or Banaras, modern Varanasi, where he held discussions with and preached to learned pandits, collectively symbolised by the name of *Caturvedi* or *Caturdas* in the *Janam Sakhis*, that is those learned in the sciences of the four Vedas. The purport of these discussions has been compressed by Guru Nanak himself, in his revelation called, *Omkar*, and the doctrine preached is that God resides in the human heart and the human mind could become aware of it through the discipline of the Name. Those who accepted the way of life preached by the Guru, were organised into *sangat* and the leader of that *sangat* was appointed as the Sikh missionary at Banaras. The headquarters of this congregation is now marked as, *Guru ka bagh*, where a *gurdwara* stands to commemorate the Guru's visit. From there the Guru journeyed further east and went to Gaya, from there he detoured towards Patna where a rich jeweller, by the name of Salis Rai, accepted his teachings and was appointed a Sikh missionary at the head of a Sikh congregation. He went onwards to Assam and Dacca. At Dhubri, in Assam, Guru Nanak's visit is commemorated by an artificial hillock surmounted by an altar. The hillock was raised through the voluntary labours of a Rajput General of Emperor Aurangzeb when at the head of an expedition of Assam. The Guru returned by the way of 24 Parganas. He went along the coast and came to Cuttack where a *gurdwara* named, *Datan Sahib*, commemorates his visit. At Jagannath Puri he visited the world-famous temple and did not participate in the magnificent *arti* to *Jagannath* in his own way. The purport of what he explained to these priests is paraphrased in a revelation, most magnificent hymn, favourably comparable in grandeur of diction and depth of thought to the famous hymn, *Ushas* in the *Rig Veda*. It runs as follows :

"The sky is the salver and the sun and the moon are
the golden lamps, and the stars the scattered pearls.
The winds waft incense. The flowers shed luminence.
So is Thy *Arti* performed, Thou, the Dispeller of

fear and Dispenser of mercy.”⁸

9. The Guru then returned to his home in the Punjab passing through central India where, *Janam Sakhies* are unanimous and clear that, he preached his gospel to aboriginal tribes making them give up the crude life of cannibalism and unnecessary violence.

10. Before he started on his second *udasi* he crossed the river Ravi and went to Pakpattan, the headquarters of the Sufis of the persuasion of Sheikh Farid the Shakarganj. A very large proportion of the mass conversions of Hindus of the West Punjab to Islam are ascribable to the activities of Sheikh Farid, the Shakarganj and his descendants during the 12th and 13th centuries. His discussions with the reigning pontiff of this centre of Sufis of the verses of Sheikh Farid, the Shakarganj and the Guru's comments there on are included in the *Guru Granth*. He roamed about in the central and western Punjab and is reported to have made a large number of converts from amongst the Pathans, then the Muslim ruling-caste. During this *udasi* he met a millionaire, Duni Chand, Khatri, at Lahore on the occasion of the latter's feast ceremonies of his late father. Guru Nanak's preaching to Duni Chand, Khatri, consisted of remark, pointing out that the variety of foods being distributed for the benefit of the soul of his deceased father might do his father's soul no good in case his father's soul was now in the body of a wolf, for the human tastes and the animal tastes differ.

11. It was during this period that he founded a new town called, Kartarpur on the right bank of the Ravi, which is now left in Pakistan, and he settled his family there before proceeding upon his second *udasi*. An appendix to a manuscript copy of the *Guru Granth* retrieved by Major Henry Erskin in the battle-field of Gujrat at the time of the Second Sikh War, in 1849 and now preserved as original manuscript No. 1125 in the British Museum at London, gives a detailed itinerary of Guru Nanak's second *udasi*, to the south India, as far as Ceylon, and the whole of this tour is commemorated by a line of *gurdwaras*, some of which still exist inspite of

8. *Guru Granth*, Dhanasri I.

their neglect by the Sikhs owing to political circumstances. Some of these prominent historical monuments exist at Rameshwaram, Salur, Bhaker and Shivkanji in Tamil Nadu, and at Colombo in Ceylon, while many of such Sikh centres of worship in the interior of Sri Lanka were destroyed by the Portugese Inquisition and fanaticism in the century following their foundation by the Guru and his Sikhs. In addition, there exist similar monuments and *gurdwaras* at Burahanpur, Surat, Mahalaxmi (Bombay), Amraoti and Nirmal containing manuscript copies of the *Guru Granth*, taken to these places by Sikh Preachers, sent by Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Gobind, the 6th and the 7th Nanaks. The Guru returned by the western coast of India to Punjab, preaching his gospel throughout on the way and making converts and establishing *sangats* or congregations.

12. The third *udasi* was commenced soon after, and in this the Guru turned his attention to the *Yogins* who were then active in the sub-montane tracts of the Himalayas. Some of the Guru's most profound philosophical revelations refer to his discussions with these *yogins*, and recluses out of which the *Siddha-gosti* is the most significant. In this itinerary he passed through Kashmir⁹ and Nepal into Western Tibet and visited the Mansarover Lake and also the famous Himalayan peak, the Kailash. The *Janam-Sakhis* record that, the denizens of Kailash were amazed to see him at the summit of the inaccessible mountain. Gorakh Mata, now in the sub-montane portion of the Uttar Pradesh was then the Head quarters of the *yogins* in the northern India, and this place henceforth became Nanak Mata and a centre for the preaching of Sikh religion. *Bhai*

9. Colnel Mian Singh, the Sikh Governor of Kashmir, constructed in 1829, an artificial lake at Mattan, fed by the Martand spring and in the midst of this lake constructed a *gurdwara*, to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak to that place. In about 1854, this *gurdwara* was demolished and converted into a temple by the Brahmin priests and remains so till today. In the times of the successor of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the Sikhs built a *Gurdwara*, on the right bank of this lake, which now commemorates Guru's visit to Mattan.

Gurdas gives a short account of the main preachings of Guru Nanak to these recluses which declares that, an attitude of world-negation and renunciation of society is self-stultifying and leads to corruption of the psyche of the recluse, implying that salvation of man was in and through society, ultimately. When asked to display some of his extra-psychic powers the Guru declared such powers as irrelevant to true religion,¹⁰ and added that ethical conduct, communion with God translated into authentic living in human society was the only true means of salvation.

13. His fourth and last *udasi* was to the Western countries, outside India. He travelled by sea to Mecca and rested in the holy enclosure with his feet towards the *ka'ba*, the sacred cubestruature, for which he was severely rebuked by an Indian Muslim priest, Rukunul-Din, for "turning his feet towards the House of God". The Guru humbly replied that he was too tired to move and that the priest may turn his feet towards the direction in which there is no *ka'ba*, or House of God. Rukunul-Din turned Guru's feet away from the sacred structure and Rukunul-Din beheld the platform of *ka'ba*, moving towards whichever direction Rukun-ul-Din moved the feet of the Guru. The Guru then solemnly repeated the verse of the Koran which says that, "Allah is in the East and in the West. So whither-so-ever ye turn, there is the face of Allah". Questioned whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim he replied: "I am a human being and Nanak is my name". When asked as to whether he considered the Hindu or the Muslim the superior way of life, he replied, "The deed is important and not creed."¹² On his return journey he came by the land route and halted at Bagdad which was at that time a great centre of Islamic religion and learning. A memorial monument, extensively repaired by a Turkish Government subsequently and bearing the date of its original erection as the year 927 Hijri (1520 A.D.) marks now the spot where Guru Nanak

10. Japu, 29—ਰਿਧਿ ਸਿਧਿ ਅਵਰਾ ਸਾਦੁ ।

11. ਪੰਜ ਤਤੁ ਕਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੁਲਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਮੋਰਾ ਨਾਓ—ਜਨਮ ਸਾਖੀ ਭਾਈ ਬਾਲਾ ।

12. ਸੁਭ ਅਮਲਾਂ ਬਾਝੇ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਰੋਈ ।—ਵਾਰਾਂ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ ।

stayed, and preached at Bagdad, and where he founded a Sikh *Sangat*. This memorial is still reverently tended and worshipped by the successors of Shah Bahlol Dana whom Guru Nanak had appointed as the head of the *sangat* at Bagdad. A Turkish-Arabic inscription on this monument describes Guru Nanak as : '*Guru murad eldi hadrat rabbul majid, baba nanak faqir.*' Many attempts have been made by 'scholars', non Sikh and not so objective or impartial to throw doubts on the authenticity and meaning both, of this stone-inscription but cross prejudice and pious envy rather than any impartial spirit of academic enquiry are seen as the real motivation here. It is not a little surprising that this Turkish inscription contains exactly the title by which Guru Nanak and his successors have been known and designated by contemporaries in India. The contemporary titles and designations of Guru Nanak and his successors invariably speak of them as, "*Guru baba, akal purakha*" which last appellation has been correctly and aptly translated into Turkish as *hadrat-rabbul majid*, and this is certainly amazing when viewed in the background of the fierce, uncompromising and monotheistic tenets of Islam, particularly as embodied in its formulated creed, the *kalima*, which speaks of no deity but Allah and Mohammed as his last prophet. The Guru returned via Afghanistan and the ancient Gandhar valley and on his way converted a Muslim saint of high repute and exalted spiritual station called, Hassan, the *abdal*, *abdal* in Arabic meaning, an anchorite who has attained exceedingly high spiritual excellence. This *abdal*, was residing near a sweet spring of water, which in all probability was a Buddhist monastery during the first centuries of the Christian Era.

This Hassan, the *abdal* was converted and appointed as the head of the Sikh *sangat* which Guru Nanak founded there. The spring which Guru Nanak hallowed by his feet is now marked by the magnificent *grudwara* of *Panja Sahib*, now left in the Attock district of Western Panjab in Pakistan. This is precisely the period when Babar invaded India for the third time at the end of 1521 A.D. At the time of this invasion, Guru Nanak was an eye-witness of the sack of Saidpur and the wholesale massacre of its inhabitants. Guru

Nanak has made poignant references to this invasion and to this massacre, calling upon God and man both, to witness the uncontained violence. God who is the creator of both, invader and the invaded.¹³

14. On 22nd December, 1539 he gave up his ghost at Kartarpur (Ravi) after appointing Guru Angad as his successor to carry out the task of reconstruction of the society in accordance with his teachings. One of his very last revelations is *Tukhari Chant*. In it, the Guru recalls with a rare, chaste passion, in a diction at once sophisticated and simple, the seasonally changing face of the land where he was born, a land which before it is seen through the eyes of the poet and the prophet Nanak, is a barren dry alluvial plain, studded with stunted monotonous shrubbery. Guru Nanak reveals the hidden beauties of this land changing face in response to the changing seasons of nature, month by month, in the literary tradition and gener of the baramaha, the Twelve Months ! In the background of these changing moods of nature in the land of his birth and childhood, Guru Nanak speaks of his passionate love of God, the restlessness of the soul, soul in search of its true nature and its yearning for unison with its original source and ultimate base, the abiding significance of human life and actions on this earth and how this life and human actions may be co-ordinated to the totality of these forces, as sustain the universe. He speaks of the totality of these forces, as a Person (*Purukhu*), and now the varying moods of nature provided an aid to the endeavours of the individual soul for unison with this person. Before passing away, he walked with his disciples out of the town of Kartarpur into the sown fields, full of dark green plants of wheat, and lied down on the ground, in the open sky under a naked bony *Jand* tree, and had the following revelation sung to the accompaniment of instrumental music in the musical mode, Majh, which recalled the commencement and significance of his Ministry on earth :

“An insignificant bard at the gate of the Lord was I.
My assignment was to sing His praises day and night.

13. *Guru Granth*, Asa I.

He, the True Lord, has now called me to his Mansions and there I go robed in honour."

15. This, briefly, is the life-story of Guru Nanak, a most dynamic personality the world has ever seen. The limited space of this article precludes the possibility of giving any detailed exposition of Guru Nanak's outlook on life or his teachings. Guru Nanak was born at a time when the north-western India had already succumbed to the dominative impact and influence of Islam during the previous three centuries. The age of Muslim invasions in India from 664 A.D. to 1206 A.D. had passed and the stable establishment of Muslim domination had been accomplished. In northern India particularly, the Hindu mind was in a state of much fermentation and disintegration owing to the Muslim impact, and in the revelations of Guru Nanak there are numerous and poignant references to the resultant social and religious conditions. In Var-Asa of the *Guru Granth*, we are categorically told that the old Hindu world has crumbled irretrievably : *car varan ik hoe dharam ki gati rahi*. In more than one ways it was a period of fundamental transition, politically, culturally and spiritually. It was a period of political disintegration. The Sultanate of Delhi came to an end with the invasion of Babar and the Mughal period began, signifying, as the intriguing *Bhavishyapurana* text tells us "destruction of Hindu identity and the vedic dharma."¹⁴ It was also the exact point of transition from medieval India to modern India which was heralded by the arrival of a portuguese, Vasco-da-Gama at Calicut in 1498 A.D. and the victory of Babur at panipat in 1526 A.D. Modern India, from political standpoint, is a resultant of the two forces released by these two historical events. The five preceding centuries had seen the invasion and gradual infiltration of Islam in India and before the Mughal power was clearly established leading to firm political unity of Indian sub-continent once again after a lapse of about seventeen centuries, two facts strike as outstanding to a student of

14. नानाश वेदं मार्गस्थानं देहली देशम् म स्थितः ।

पञ्चवर्षं कृतं राज्यं नामस्य बाबरोऽभवत् ॥

History. One was the political separation between the South and North India leading to containment and stagnation. Ever since the Muslims had firmly established themselves in the form of Sultanate of Delhi (1206 A.D.), they had attempted to extend their domination upto the farthest end of the Indian sub-continent within the first century of their arrival. This had necessitated, in view of the condition of the communications then prevalent, a shift of the centre of Muslim power from Delhi to Daulatabad (1327 A.D.). But the Tughlaks soon found out that it was futile to attempt to dominate over the south of India, and within ten years of this venture of the shifting of the capital, the great Hindu empire of Vijaynagar emerged. In quick succession of emergence of this Hindu Empire, almost within ten years, the Brahmani Sultanate was founded in the Deccan which demonstrated that the forces responsible for the political separation of the South from the North were by no means religious. The second outstanding fact of the pre-Mughal epoch, is the decline of the authority and influence of the Delhi Sultanate even in North India, in Bengal in the East India and Sind in the West. The authority of Delhi Sultanate was openly repudiated by rebellious governors, and the Rajputs were threatening to overwhelm the surrounding Muslim kingdoms of Delhi, Malwa and Gujarat. In the wake of the invasion of the Timur-i-ling (1398-99 A.D.) Malwa and Gujarat finally broke away from Delhi. Such was the political disintegration prevailing in India at the time when Guru Nanak was born. Culturally also, it was a turning point in the history of India. New highways on the seas had been opened up establishing contacts with the Western World, and fresh invasions from Central Asia, had extended communications and contacts with races professing ways of life which were fundamentally different from those of the Hindu race. The great Indologist, Albiruni, in his *kitābul-Hind* tells us that, "we (the Muslims) believe in nothing in which they (the Hindus) believe and they believe in nothing which we do."¹⁵ This period, therefore, witnessed a cultural

15. Chatterjee, S.K., *Albiruni's Commemorative Volume*, Calcutta, 1960 p. 19

spectable about which Sir John Marshal says¹⁶ that, "seldom in the history of mankind has the spectacle been witnessed of two civilisations so vast and so strongly developed, yet so radically dissimilar as the Mohammdan and the Hindu, meeting and clashing and mingling together".

16. What was this Hindu culture which was being so violently shaken and reshaped by these cultural and political upheavals ? A critical study of the development of the cultural history of the Hindu race reveals the existence in it of two distinct and separable culture-forms and impulses since the earliest times, when the vedic Aryans are said to have conquered and subdued the pre-historic Mohenjodaro civilization and peoples of India in the second millenium B.C. This is hardly a place for discussing the genesis and contents of these two culture-forms but they may conveniently be described as *Brahmanic* and *Sramanic* culture-forms, broadly represented by the ceremonial activities and social way of life reflected in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*, and the individualist, contemplative reclusive way of life represented in the reflections of the Upanisadas. The first is grounded in the recognition of a social heirarchy, a caste system, the second recognises human equality in the spiritual sphere. The one is aristocratic by temperament and insists upon Sanskrit as the only fit vehicle for expressing and communicating spiritual truths and cultural activities of the race, the other is democratic and freely employs *prakrits* and vernaculars for the purposes of religion and culture. The former is racial and national in spirit insisting that Aryan truths are the monopoly and prerogative of the Hindus bounded by the geographical limits of India, the latter is universal and missionary in spirit, declaring that the whole humanity, irrespective of race and creed, are legitimate heirs to these truths. The first lays exclusive stress on ceremony and formal conformity of conduct, the second essentially insists on the necessity of the inner culture and *Sadhana*. These two culture-forms co-exist and overlap,

16. So far available only in the form of the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 33, 1947, in the form of *Rhys Memorial Lecture*. Also, R.F.M. Wheeler, *Ancient India* No. 3, London, 1947.

comingle, influence and modify each other throughout the last 2500 years of the cultural history of the Hindus. The Vedic period lasting from about 1500 to 800 B.C., as the European scholars compute it, mainly represented the Brahmanic way of life, and the Upanisadic period lasting from B.C. 500 to 100 A.D. represented, mainly, the *Sramanic* way of life, marking the development of Upanisadas and accompanied by the growth and expansion of Jainism and Buddhism. This is followed by a revival of the Brahmanic way of life during the hey-day of the great Hindu Empire of the Guptas and flowering into the Incarnation-doctrine, *avatarvada*, codified in the Addendum to the *Mahabharata*, called *Harivamsa*. The latest archeological excavations in India and their recent interpretation by experts throw a most revealing light on the roots of the above mentioned culture-forms and the subsequent shapes which these culture-forms have assumed throughout the history of the Hindu race up to the conclusion of the 18th century. It has now become clear that the potent forces behind the organisation of the Harrappa culture, which symbolised and supported the pre-Aryan culture and civilisation in India were, by no means, wholly secular and the archeological finds more than hint that the priesthood of some religious order played a considerably important part in the regulation of the Harrappa economy, as appears from certain walled structures of the two capital cities so far dug out, of Mohenjodaro in Sindh and Harrappa in Montgomery District of West Pakistan. Such rule by priests, by probably priest-kings, would be altogether in accordance with what is known of other contemporary ancient civilisations in Western Asia where the written record in the form of cuneiforms and hieroglyphs has provided us with knowledge and with insight which are beyond the limits of Archeology, and it is not unlikely that the pre-Aryan culture and civilisation, individual and peculiar though it probably was, did not differ radically in respect of its basic organisation from its sister cultures and civilisations. Some of the relics found during the excavations of these two ancient cities throw light on the organisation of its basis and also furnish links between the Hindu culture-forms and

religion as we know them from the times of *Rig Veda* and the religion of our pre-Aryan ancestors. The numerous clay figurines of women in all these excavations, whether in Baluchistan or Sindh, Western Punjab or Gujarat suggest that there was some form of worship of a Mother-goddess in which these figurines played their part in household shrines, and there is a clayseal impression which bears a representation of a female form from whose womb issue branches of a plant which suggests the idea of an Earth-goddess connected with vegetation. Such gods are by no means rare in the Hinduism of the countryside even today, the *gram devatas* and *Kul—devis* of many a shrine in the countryside, particularly in the Himalayan region where iconoclastic Muslim impact has not been so fierce. Secondly, the priests of such shrines are rarely Brahmins whose authority would date back to the Aryan invasion or supremacy by the middle of the B.C. second millenium, but these priests are the outcastes who still know the ways and customs of the gods who were the sovereign rulers before Rig Vedic gods. The development of the concept of *Sakti*, as a counterpart of the all Vedic gods, at quite an early period of the development of Hindu religious thought is definitely traceable to the cult of these pre-Aryan clay-figurines.¹⁷ In later centuries, whether it is the cult of Visnu or Siva, Hari or Hara, or whether it is the development of Sakatism in its pure form, it is these clay-figurines who animate and mould the subsequent development of Hindu religious thought. This is not the only link of Mohenjodaro and Harrappa with the contemporary Hinduism. There is more than one representation on the seals from Mohenjodaro and Harrappa of

17. "Mesopotamia worshipped a beneficial *Great Mother* whose fertility was seen in the produce of the Earth and who gained additional religious importance by a variety of associations. The Earth was viewed as counterpart, and hence, spouse of Heaven, *Anu*, or of the waters, *Enki*, or even of the kingly storm-God, *Enlil*. In Egypt, on the other hand, the Earth was a male god, GEBPTAH or OSRIS: the ubiquitous Mother Goddess was not connected with the soil. Her image was cast in the primitive and ancient guise of the cow". Frankfort, Henri *et al*, *Before Philosophy* Penguin, London, 1952, p. 239.

a male-god, horned and three-faced, *trimurti* Siva so strikingly sculptured in the Elephanta Caves, Bombay offshore, sitting in the posture of a yogi, *Padamasana* and on one seal this three-faced yogi is surrounded by beasts, unmistakably suggesting the *pasupati* Siva who is also 'the prince of the yogins', *yogeswar*. The four beasts who are represented on this particular seal are the tiger, the elephant, rhino and the buffaloe, with a couple of deer at his feet. This yogi on the seal may very well have been conceived as four-faced, the fourth face being incapable of representation on a two-dimensional place, with his four traditional links to the four quarters of the earth. This would readily recall the symbolical elephant, lion, horse and bull of the column of Asoka of B.C. third century at Sarnath from which the *dharmacakkara*, Asokan Wheel, now imposed on the Tricolour Flag of the Republic of India, has been borrowed. The word *Shri* which in Indian official parlance and in official correspondence has, almost instinctively and unofficially been adopted in supersession of all other courtesy-titles, after 1947, is unmistakably and directly traceable to the concept of the female counterparts of major gods of Hindu pantheon, which concept has its roots in the clay-figurines found in the pre-Aryan cities of Mohenjodaro and Harrappa, and which, in the hands of the philosophical Hindus, has grown into the theological doctrine of dichotomy and bifurcation of the Ultimate Basis of the Universe *Siva sakti*. The presence of deer by the feet of the horned yogi on the above-mentioned seal furnishes another significant link with the later religion of Gautama, the Buddha, where the Jatakas represent Gautama as a king of the deer in one of his previous lives, Sarnath, *Sarangnath*, itself signifying the place where this king of the deer had his earthly career. There is also evidence of phallic linga-worship in the Mohenjodaro and Harrappa culture. Representations of *lingam* and *yonis* have been found, and also of tree-worship, as a female deity is shown concealed in the branches of a *pipal* tree, which is still the holy tree of the Hindus, *ficus religiosa*. On the places of pottery discovered in the lowest layers at Harrappa, and Kulli,

Baluchistan, *pipal* leaves provide the dominant motif for pottery painters. The well known Mohenjodaro seal-representation of the bull again shows that the humped bull was a sacred animal, true prototype of the sacred Siva's bull, *Nandi*, found in most Saivite temples of which the gigantic black *nandi* of Cammundi hill, Mysore is most famous, and the privileged position which this holy animal occupies to day as he slowly and royally noses his way unmolested through our streets and bazars, helping himself to whatever takes his sacred fancy, must date back to at least the B.C. 3rd millenium, if not the B.C. 5th millenium on the banks of the Indus and the Ravi rivers. These links are of profound and immediate interest, providing as they do some explanation of those many features that cannot be traced from the Aryan tradition brought into India after, or concurrently with the fall of the Mohenjodaro and Harrappa civilization. The old faiths die hard. It is even possible that early historic Hindu society and its organisation, owed more to Harrappa and Mohenjodaro than it did to the Sanskrit-speaking Aryans.

17. The Hinduism which was shaken to its very foundations by the Muslim impact was, in the five centuries preceeding the rise of Guru Nanak, a body of customs and a body of ideas, the two together having such pervasive power and defensive force as to absorb or resist, in a passive or stubborn manner, for centuries past, any system that came in contact with it, though it found itself as not altogether strong enough to absorb the shock which the Muslim impact gave it. It is sometimes assumed, and even claimed by Muslims themselves that, the majority of them in India represent the influx of foreigners during the past centuries, though such hardly is the case. A great majority of Muslims in India are Hindu converts, though in their composition and their relation with the Hindus, they exhibit a complexity which is not easy to analyse. The first group of Muslims, no doubt, came in the shape of invading armies from North West. They were armies in contrast to all the earlier invasions, which were folk-migrations, the Aryans, Scythians and the Hunas. As such they did not make any

large scale settlements on the soil of India. From the very start, these men formed a military ruling caste, and though their numbers were considerable enough to form communities they were scattered groups rather than compact bodies. These men and their descendants scattered, formed, first a military aristocracy, then a ruling caste and eventually a social *elite*. They are still to be seen in the Indian Muslims families of the upper strata, the *Qureishis*, the *Sayyads*, the *Chughtais* and the *Bukharies*, not all of them genetically genuine. The remaining Muslim population, almost ninety five per cent of it, are Hindu converts, mostly low-castes. These conversions were of two kinds, individual among the upper classes of the Hindus and mass among the lower classes. Upper class Hindu individuals embraced Islam either from conviction or from policy. A long list could be made of persons during Muslim rule, holding high rank and official positions, who were Hindu converts. But the bulk of Muslim population comes from mass converts, some as a result of forcible conversions, terror or economic duress, but others, and there is considerable number of such mass conversions, who embraced Islam voluntarily. Wherever the Muslims were established in power the Islam could not have failed to attract the Hindu outcastes. Its promise of brotherhood, its simple and complete demands, its comparatively few taboos opened up a new world to any outcaste who could see beyond the sun-baked mud walls and the surrounding shrub-land of his village. There is another, but very little known, factor which accounts for these mass conversions, the decadent Mahayana Buddhism. Not long before the Muslim impact in the 11th century, the Buddhist population in India, by and large, came under the political domination of the militant Hindu dynasties who were active protagonists of the Brahmanic form of culture which is the traditional antithesis of the *Sramanic* form of culture. The resultant cultural conflict considerably aided the alliance of Buddhist masses with political Islam, both in north western India and Ghandhara valley, as well as in east India and Bengal. The subtle metaphysical doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism, called the doctrine of the *trikaya*, as understood by the generality of the

Buddhist masses, helped and hastened the absorption of these populations into Islam. The Buddhist Trinity or *trikaya* is a complex doctrine and, as understood by the Buddhist masses of Mahayana persuasion, it represents grades of Buddhahood, *dharmakaya*, *sambhogkaya* and *nirmankaya*. These are a complex group of conceptions and are typical of the subtlety of Mahayana thought. Buddhahood, according to the esoteric tradition, has seven Buddha *kshetras* of which the *trikaya* represents the three, just as the 'body', 'soul' and 'spirit' of St. Paul is a condensed version of the seven-fold human nature of early Greek philosophers. From another angle, these grades of Buddhahood include *Sampuran Buddha*, *Pratyeka Buddha* etc., and *dharmakaya* i.e. the body of the Dharma, which is the religious vesture of a Buddha, is supposed to be present in varying degrees in all ages and climes. It was the doctrine of *trikaya*, which made it easy for the Buddhist masses of north western India and eastern India to accept the status and authority of Prophet Mohammed, as the foundation-head of revealed truth. For, in the Buddhism, as Dr. Suzuki has pointed out,¹⁸ 'Mahayana Buddhism is a religion which developed around the life and personality of Buddha rather than a religion based upon the words of his mouth. The person is greater and more real than his words. In fact, words gain validity because of the person behind them.' To be absorbed into Islam, and to renounce their ancestral faith, the Buddhist masses, when they came in contact with Islam, did not experience any great spiritual qualms such as the Hindu masses of the *svarna* Brahmanic classes did.

18. On the political plane, their conversions to Islam did not represent a crude coercion, as it did in the case of the militant and priestly classes of the Hindus whose political power had been extinguished, but it was a release for them from the political tensions and cultural pressure in which they were living. On the religious and spiritual plane, the conversion to Islam represented to them an easy and an

18. *The Shin Sects of Buddhism*, in *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. VII, page 229.

almost imperceptible glide. Once it was accepted that *dharamkaya* was, in the historical past, the vesture of the Prophet of Arabia, Mohammed, the rest became easy. The Koran, as the revealed truth through Mohammed, then logically became the code of conduct and repository of religious truth to be meticulously followed. The catholicism, the universality, and the metaphysical subtlety of Mahayana Buddhism, which had made it into a great world-religion for a thousand years in the greater part of Asia, directly facilitated the accession of its populations to Islam, while those who followed Brahmanic Hinduism showed far greater tenacity and resistance to the impact and onslaught of Islam. Our Al-Biruni (970-1039) the author of the *Kitab-ul-Hind*, who came to India in the wake of the invasion of Mahmood of Ghazni, notes in chaste Arabic but with unconcealed acerbity that, "Hindus believe that there is no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no religion like theirs, and no science like theirs." Al-Biruni adds that, "the ancestors of the Hindus were not so narrow-minded as the present generation."¹⁹

19. Something has already been said as to what the essential teachings of Guru Nanak are. Considerable ignorance and misunderstanding prevails about these teachings for a variety of reasons. He has been called the exponent of the Bhakti movement in medieval India, and it has even been asserted that he was a disciple of Kabir. Intelligent scholars no longer assert that there was any personal contact or even intellectual commerce between Kabir and Guru Nanak, but it is not properly realised that Guru Nanak was neither a *bhakta* in the historical sense of the word, nor an exponent of the Bhakti School of medieval India.

20. What is Bhakti School and what is a *bhakta*? Literally, *bhakti* is understood as devotion to God, a fervent devotion to God. In that sense it is an essential part of all Deistic religions, past and present. It is to be found wherever men turn in eagerness of desire or in extremity of despair away from themselves, to a supreme power, *Du*,

19. *Alberuni's India*, tr : E.C. Sachau, London, 1888, I. 321.

of Martin Buber : "You perceive it and it for your Truth",²⁰ capable of controlling their environments and their destinies. This *bhakti* is unmistakably present in our earliest records, *Vedas*, and in *Rig Veda*, the grace of god, Varuna²¹, already provides the ground for and expression of *bhakti*. In the Egyptian Pyramid texts and in the writings of the baked tablets of Mesopotamia, in the texts of the Old and New Testaments of the Jews, this element of *bhakti* is unmistakably present. In the Hindu Sacred literature, however, the idea of *bhakti* had a genesis and development of its own. It is not with the general and abstract idea of *bhakti* with which we are here concerned when assessing the teachings of Guru Nanak, with reference to the claim that he belongs to the Bhakti School of Hinduism but with the historical development of this idea of *bhakti* in the religious history of Hinduism. In the later-than-*Vedas* literature of the *Brahmanas* (B.C.800-500) Visnu, though only one of the gods, already has assumed an attraction which distinguishes him from the others. Whether it is to rectify an error in a ritual of *yajna*, or it is in marriage, Visnu's aid is invariably invoked, but by far the most important reference to Visnu in the Brahmanas is the legend which is subsequently incorporated in the Addendum, *Khilla*, to *Mahabhart*a, called *Harivamsa*, the legend in which Vishnu, as Vamanavtar, redeemed the Earth from the oppression of the king of demons, the asura, Bali. Visnu as *Vaman*, was contemptuously offered by Bali as much of the earth as he could measure by his three strides. Straightaway, *Vaman* swelled into the huge form of *Trivikram*, the Grant of the three Strides, and with his first step bestrode the whole earth, with the second the whole heavens and his third stride he placed on the head of Bali thus killing him : *at danen bali badho...ati sarvatra varjayeti*, 'Bali lost his life because he gifted excessively... all excess is dangerous'. It is this thread of the legend

20. *Du nimmst sie Wahr--Ich und Du*, 1924.

21. "In whom all wisdom centres, as the nave is set within wheel. Haste ye to honour Varuna (trita) as Kine haste to gather in the field, even as they muster steeds to joke"—VIII. 41 tr. Griffith. R.T.H., *The hymns of the Rig Veda*. 3rd. ed. Banaras, 1920-26.

which is taken over in *Bhagvadgita* (B.C. 200) and transformed into magnificent doctrine of the god, Visnu assuming terrestrial forms, 'whenever there is decline in Dharma on earth' *Yada yadahi dharamasya gilanir bhavati..* This doctrine, in the *Bhagvadgita*, is the corner-stone of the Hindu Bhakti movement. Whatever the philosophical inconsistencies of this doctrine it has struck firm roots in the Hindu mind during the last two thousand years. This doctrine, in the first place, takes the shape of the identity of the *Brahman* and the *Atman* of the Upanisads, and then identifies it with the god, Visnu, who is one of the three gods of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Brahma and Siva. Visnu and *Brahma* are, from now onwards, convertible terms. Secondly, it identifies Visnu with certain proto-historical personalities, such as, Rama and Krishan, and lastly, it lays down the technics of salvation and release from recurrent births, the method of *bhaktimarg*, in addition to the two methods already approved, the *jnanmarg* and the *karammarg*. How the incarnated god can be reconciled with the impersonal actionless, Absolute, *Brahmn* of Upanisads and of *advaitavada* of the later *Samkaracarya*, the *Bhagvadgita* does not satisfactorily answer. It was not until many centuries had passed that the Bhakti movement found a competent philosopher in the person of Ramanuj (1017-1137) and in his *visistadvaita* he tried to reconcile the conception of impersonal *Brahmn* with the incarnated Visnu. But Ramanuj was not the morning star of the Bhakti movement as is sometimes assumed. Between the period of *Bhagvadgita* and Ramanuj, a mighty movement of Bhakti took birth and flourished in South India represented by a succession of over fifty saints, known as *Alvars*.

21. In their hymns and songs, these *Alvar* saints assume the position taken up in the *Bhagvadgita* with regard to the identity of Visnu and Krishna, and in the type of devotion which they represent and approve. They maintain *bhaktimarg* as the sure way to salvation. This happened in the period between 7th and 9th centuries of the Christian era²² and a

22. The traditional dates, asserted by *Alvars* themselves are B.C. 4203-2706, though modern scholarship is now in general agreement that they were predecessors of Ramanuja and preceded him by couple of centuries.

parallel movement of *bhakti* also arose which identified the *Brahmn* with Siva but without positing that Siva had assumed a historical incarnation. The thesis held by some recent scholars that, the Bhakti movement in India owed its origin or main stimulus to influence or impact of Islam is thus found to be rather far fetched.²³ The hymns of these Alvar saints, which are all in the Tamil language, were gathered together by Nathmuni in 920 A. D. and were called, *Nalayira-prabandham*, and these hymns are regarded by Alvars as embodying the essence and validity of the Vedas and they are used in replacement of sacred Sanskrit texts in the ritual worship by the Alvars. These facts are interesting as they throw light on certain facets of the Sikh movement as it developed out of the teachings of Guru Nanak. Guru Arjan, the Fifth Nanak, collected his own revelations and of his predecessors into one volume, called, *Adi-Granth* (1604 A.D) and this *Adigranth*, is popularly referred to as the fifth *Veda* in northern India. This 'fifth Veda' in succession of time to the four previous Vedas, is believed to supercede and replace them all. The suggestion which is sometimes made that the *Adigranth* was compiled with a view to give the Sikh people the status of 'the People of the Book', *ahlikitab*, "those to whom Allah spoke",²⁴ to obtain for them a political status higher than that of the Hindus and to save them from the exactions of *jeziyeh*, is thus shown to be merely fanciful, if not spiteful. Bhakti was imported to northern India by a follower of Ramanujacarya, Ramanand. Ramanand came to reside at Benaras, modern, Varanasi, in about 1430 A.D. and the movement which he founded there produced two mighty figures, Kabir and Tulsidas. Kabir sought to bridge the gulf between the creeds of the Hindus and the Muslims by preaching *bhakti* of an impersonal God, while Tulsidas followed the conservative tradition of preaching the *bhakti* of a personal god, Visnu incarnated as Rama. At the end of the 13th century, *bhakti* appeared in Maharashtra and Western India through the works of Jnanesvar, who wrote

23. Dr. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Delhi, 1950.

24. II. 254. (Koran)

a commentary on the Bhagvadgita in verse. In the 16th and 17th centuries the Bhakti movement flowered into its full bloom with Tukaram and Caitanya in the north-east India. Caitanya worshipped Visnu in the form of Krishan and Tukaram in the form of his village god, *Vithobha*. Mention has already been made of *bhakti* towards Siva as a god of the Hindu Trinity and by the great Tamil poet Manikka-vicar (circa 900 A.D.) in his *Saivasidhanta*, wherein god Siva is transformed into Siva, the Saviour. Bhakti is also preached by the Sakatas in their scripture, *Devi Bhagvati*. From these synopses of the development of Bhakti thought in India, it becomes clear that *bhakti* as a devotional attitude in religion must be distinguished from Bhakti proper which is equivalent to *bhagvata-puja*, that is, devotion towards god, Visnu or, at other times, towards some other deity of the Hindu Trinity or outside it. When it is asserted that Guru Nanak was not a Bhakta, what is meant is, firstly, that he did not teach that *Bhaktimarg*, that is, mere emotional devotion, constituted the whole or the essence of religious activity or that it was in itself exclusively sufficient for salvation, whatever the content of that term 'salvation' may be, and secondly, (2) that he is not, in any sense, a follower of the doctrine that takes its inception from the doctrine in *Bhagvadgita* asserting the identity of the Absolute Brahman with Visnu and the identity of Vishnu with the incarnated human form of Krishana or some other protohistorical figure.

22. The essence of this Bhakti movement may thus be summed up in the following two propositions :

(1) That God Visnu is a compassionate Person, who out of his compassion for human beings incarnates himself from time to time, *sambhavami—yugeyuge*, and has so incarnated himself as Rama and Krishna, the protohistorical individuals.

(2) That the finite selves may be saved through the loving worship of this incarnated god.

23. By implication, this doctrine of Bhakti transcends distinctions of caste in so far as the spiritual salvation of finite selves through *bhakti* is concerned. There is splinter group of this Bhakti movement whose greatest exponent is

Kabir, called, the *nirguna* School, as contrasted with the *sarguna* School, who worship God in His human incarnations. The *nirguna* School lays stress on worship of God in His infinite and formless aspect. The *nirguna* School neither denies the possibility or historical truth of 'Incarnations', nor crusades against the Institutes of caste as embodied in the *varn-asramadharma*. It does not protest against the social discrimination inherent in the doctrine and the political consequences of such discrimination, nor does it challenge the sources of authority in which these distinctions are rooted, the corpus of Sanskrit Brahmanic literature, from *Rigveda*,²⁵ down through the *Bhagvadgita*,²⁶ to *Manavadharmasastra*.²⁷ In ultimate analysis, the *nirguna* School is essentially a methodology and not a fundamentally distinct doctrine. It is a method of salvation for the finite selves and no more.

24. It has been necessary to go through this cultural background of Hinduism and to provide this historical perspective of its political and social conditions so as to furnish a backdrop to the content and significance of the religion revealed by Guru Nanak. The birth of Guru Nanak is thus seen to coincide with one of the most critical periods of the history of the Hindu race, if not, indeed, the entire mankind. A whole political and cultural epoch had come to an end and medieval India concluded with the second battle of panipat in 1526 A.D. A unified modern India took birth from the ruins of a disintegrated and medieval India. The organism of the Hindu society and Hindu culture had, for the first time in its history, failed to absorb the shock of a foreign impact, that of Islam, and to assimilate it. Hinduism, sometimes, likened to a ship in which one can compare its heirarchical castes and the essential ideas that bind them, with the steel frame-work and special fixtures, such as the engines and the steering gear, which fixtures are located in some parts but not in all sections of the Hindu ship. So, it is claimed a

25. ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखभासीद बाहू राजन्यकृतः ।

ऊरु तदस्य यद वैश्यः पादाभ्याम् शूद्रोऽजायत् ॥ XI. 90

26. चातुर्वर्ण्यमया सृषिष्टः ॥ IV. 13

27. I. 87.99.

mixture of all these component parts, a loss of any one of which would involve the sinking of the ship. This view of Hinduism still persists along with a faith in its almost limitless powers of assimilation and its capacity to endure. The analysis of the consequences of the impact of Islam on the Hindu race given above should provide a necessary corrective to this faith and optimism on which, some contemporary politician might wish to base his state policies today. Some modern ships are so carefully constructed and sub-divided with such technical perfection that they are deemed unsinkable, a claim similar to that made on behalf of Hinduism. Seamen, however, know that these claims of unsinkability are only based on a calculation of known and predictable dangers. This, at any rate, is the warning note implicit in the teachings of Guru Nanak. In this cultural and historical background, and in the locale of the north-western India and the Punjab where always decisive political and cultural struggles and upheavals have taken place crucial to the destiny of the Hindu race, Guru Nanak set upon his appointed task of laying down the foundations of a new Society which must retain all that is true in the past, and yet accept supplementation and re-arrangement to guard against the already known dangers and to provide strength and elasticity necessary for future risks and perils. Guru Nanak is neither a '*bhakta*' as our *Akasvani* delights in referring to him and nor an adherent of the *nirguna* school of Bhakti as aspirants to academic doctorates in our present day universities love to dub him. His only contention with the Bhakti movement is of an accidental character, of chronological nature. Historically, he lived in the 15th century which was a flowering century of Bhakti movement in the northern India and this alone relates him to this phase of Hinduism. Secondly, Guru Nanak, in his revelations, makes use of metaphors and phrases, verbal expressions and idioms which are the stock-in-trade of the religious pious literature of his times, which was more or less, inevitable. With regard to the meanings and nuances of these metaphors and phrases, he leaves no doubt whatever that he is transvaluating and not mechanically copying.

That which sharply distinguishes him from the Bhakti movement as well as the *nirguna* School is demonstrably fundamental. Guru Nanak absolutely repudiates the concept of Incarnation of God, Who is *ajuni saibhanga*, unborn and self-existent.²⁸ Guru Nanak denies the adequacy and efficacy of any mere emotional approach or loving adoration of formal God for salvation though he concedes its high value.²⁹ Guru Nanak insists that a life lived in a social context and on an ethical plan is necessary for salvation. His concept and content of 'salvation' is also distinct from that conceived by the followers of the Bhakti School, in more than one fundamental respect. Above all, Guru Nanak repudiates, not only the Hindu caste structure but the whole basis of the divine authority for *Vārnasrama-dharma* and asserts that a full and authentic religious life is impossible without such repudiation. These are fundamental and significant points and an appreciation of these distinctions alone can explain why Guru Nanak's teachings resulted in the birth of a political nation and a special society while no such fruits ripened out of the variegated chromatism of the Bhakti movement.

25. As a philosophical foundation of the religion he brought to men, Guru Nanak rejected *mayavad-vedanta* : the interpretation by Samkara of the Upanisadas, which doctrine involves a denial of the reality of the world, and which doctrine has glaciated and pervaded the whole thought of the Hindu race. It is epitomised in the cliché : *Tattwa-masi*. All moral and individual distinctions are, in this way, obliterated, the criminal and the saint are equally manifestations of Brahman, and to believe that one has a separate individuality A, B or C is to dwell into a state of gross error and crass illusion, or at least, a state in which the facts are fundamentally misperceived and misconceived. Thus a social life on a rigorous ethical plane, with an abiding

28. *Japu, mulmantra*

29. Pandit Ayudhiya Singh, *Origin and Growth of the Hindi Language and its literature*, Hindu University, Banaras, 1952,

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sense of duties and rights, becomes inconceivable, and the absence of social cohesion, and consequent political weakness logically and inevitably proceed from this position. Guru Nanak has placed his new Society on a sound philosophic base. His *Japu* is believed by many as an epitome of Nanak's philosophy and teachings and the whole of the remaining *Guru Granth* is viewed as essentially exegetic. This thesis about the *Japu* is arguable and in the *Japu*, Guru Nanak has clearly laid down that the moral categories and imperatives are absolutely real and abiding, and not mere verbal quibblings or relativistic.³⁰ Having thus repudiated *mayavad-vedanta* and having firmly established the validity and the absolute ontological status of ethical categories Guru Nanak preached that the content of salvation was not merely individual but collective and social. Thus is the validity of social progress and political activity, within the frame work of a religious life of the highest order, retrieved.

26. The organisation of the Sikhs into the *Khalsa Panth*, as a political organisation founded with the explicit and declared object of gaining political fulcrum so as to establish a free, vital and progressive Society in which it becomes possible for each individual to develop his personality as a limb of the Society. That religion is to be practised not in utter and unrelated seclusion and retirement, not by a denial and negation of the world and sense-experience, but on the social, ethical and co-operative plane, is the point which Guru Nanak is clearly making in the 16th stanza of the *Japu*. These teachings and these doctrines can have nothing but a remote and superficial resemblance with the teachings of the Bhakti School, and the historical contiguity of Guru Nanak to a certain phase of the Bhakti movement in northern India is more than a coincidence. These teachings of Guru Nanak entail fundamental and far-reaching social and political consequences, and the history of the Panjab, henceforth inevitably, becomes the Sikh history. During the last days of his

30. ਪੁੰਨੀ ਪਾਪੀ ਆਖਣ ਨਾਹਿ ।

31. ਜਿਨੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਗਏ ਮਸਕਤਿ ਘਾਲਿ, ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਕੋਤੀ ਛਟੀ ਨਾਲਿ ।
(Japu Sloke)

sojourn on this earth, he settled, as already said, in a township which he himself founded on the right bank of the river Ravi, called, Kartarpur. He settled as a farmer on the lands surrounding this township and worked there with his own hands, so as by precept and by deed to teach and demonstrate as to what one of the three pillars of Sikhism, *kirat karo* signifies. This means, engaging in honest, non-exploitive, creative labour. All the fruits of the labour, whether of his own or of his Sikhs were pooled into a common fund out of which the needs of the local community were met and out of which a common and free kitchen was run and which was open to all those who needed food and which fund was open to all those who stood in some need or succour. Thus Guru Nanak exhorted mankind to adopt a life of religion, a life of nearness to and awareness of God, a life of ethical conduct and a life of social service, of mutual co-operation, and of self-sacrifice, in short, a way of life alone capable of redeeming man.

27. What Guru Nanak's teachings and life's work amount to is not merely the inception of a religious movement, much less a phase of Bhakti movement of medieval India. Happily, Nietzsche has given us a phrase through which we may comprehend the true significance of the achievements of Guru Nanak. The phrase is "Transvaluation of Values". The process of this kind is neither a phase nor a link in any preceding historical movement, strictly speaking. It is the most fundamental character of a civilisation, of every civilisation. It is the beginning of a civilisation in that it remoulds all the basic forms of a culture that went before. It understands them differently and practices them in another way. Apparently, as it strikes all but the most keen observes, it begets no more, but only reinterprets. But it is neither a repetition nor a continuation but a new fundamental phenomenon. Indeed, such a process alone, as is the case with the teachings of Guru Nanak, assumes that the genuine act of creation has already occurred enabling it to enter upon an inheritance of big actualities. It is in this sense that Guru Nanak might be said to have founded no novel religion but merely unfolded the potentialities that lay dormant in the

human psyche.

28. Nevertheless, Guru Nanak has ushered in a new spiritual Era as well as a social and political Era for the mankind.

29. This was not a matter of mere political or even religious transformation. It was the condition of the soul of a people which underwent transformation. It was the kind of process which took place in the Graeco-Roman world in the interval from Socrates to Marcus Aurelius and in the case of India at the time after the Vedic *aranyakas*, and coming into existence of the upanisadic literature, round about the time of Emperor Asoka. No external life and conduct, no institutions and customs, but the deepest and the last things are in question when such a process is initiated, and viewed thus alone it is possible to understand Guru Nanak and Sikhism, properly.

30. As a divine, inspired thinker and a religious teacher, Guru Nanak thus occupies a uniquely significant place in History. He has neatly separated pure religion from ethics and ritual. He has determined the place of religion in social context and has clearly shown their interdependence. He has, with remarkable penetration, analysed and formulated the basic problems of social organisation namely, the creation of wealth, the distribution of wealth and the organisation of power, the problems which only in recent years have assumed a clear and definite shape in the human mind, but problems to which clear and acceptable answers are still awaited. Guru Nanak gives definite and clear answers to these problems and correlates them to the problem of religion. Such clear formulation of the basic problems, their elucidation, their solution, and their correlation to each other, is not to be found easily in the past human History. His teachings arose out of the political and social problems of the Hindu race at a great critical transitional period and the answers that he gave to these problems are calculated, not only to preserve that what is best in the Hindu genius, but also to furnish a firm foundation for the reconstruction of the Hindu as well as the universal human society, to meet the requirements of the modern age, of which he is

indubitably the morning star. Further, the teachings of Guru Nanak shed and projected light into the future and seek to solve its social and religious questions, a prognostication of which problems is assuming a dim shape only to-day. Let us salute Guru Nanak.

Lecture II

GURU NANAK : A NOTE ON THE *JAPU*

The average modern man, not well versed in the ancient idiom and genre of verbal traditions of India, experiences much difficulty in following the meanings, nuances and significance of the texts, such as the *Japu* of Guru Nanak, for the *Japu* assumes such a knowledge on the part of those to whom it is addressed. Therefore, the following lines.

2. The *Vedas* admittedly contain the most ancient philosophical and religious lore of mankind, and it is the corner-stone of all religious and metaphysical thought in India, during the last three or four millenia. Gautam, the Buddha, when preaching his precepts, twenty five hundred years ago, said, as the *Dhammapada* records: “esho dhammam sanatanam”, ‘what I preach is the ancient truth.’ The ancient religious lore of India is collectively called, the *Veda*, and, therefore, very ancient, indeed. The ontological status of the *Veda*, according to the *Mimamsa* which is a *vedāṅga*, the limb of the *Veda*, is that it is un-man-made, *apaurshaya*, and eternal, *anādi*. What does this claim mean ? The *Nyāyasūtras* of Gautam, the Rishi, another *vedāṅga*, recognise four means of valid knowledge : *prataksya*, sense-perception, *anumān*, inference, *upmān*, analogy, and *sabd*, testimony. *Prataksya* furnishes the material with which the Physical Sciences deal, while *anumān* and *upmān* do not independently furnish facts. They can only ruminate and analyse the facts furnished by the *prataksya* mode of proof. The material of the *sabd* is the regions which are inaccessible to the normal human sense-perception, it being taken for granted that such regions exist, for, they are there. A person who denies the existence of such regions is a *nastaka*, ‘who denies’ and with

him there is no further argument. He is the *manmukh*,¹ 'a stone and lifeless stuff, a sorry and blank span of life'. The *Veda*, technically is the corpus of the *sabd*, containing in verbal sounds, the facts pertaining to regions beyond the range of human sense-perception. 'Mysticism', 'numenon', vaguely signify, in the West, the kind of knowledge which is the subject of the *sabd*.

3. In India, the *Veda*, the repository of the *sabd*, has been identified with the textual records, known as the *Rig-veda*, *Sam-veda*, *Yajur-veda* and *Atharva-veda*. Certain Upanisads are also commonly deemed, a part of this *Veda*, and this *Veda* has six limbs, the *vedangs*, the knowledge of which is necessary for understanding this *Veda*. These limbs are, Prosody, Pronunciation, Grammar, Etymology, Astronomy and Astrology, and the Kalpa, the Ceremonial. The ancient Sanskrit treatises on these six sciences are the *vedangs*. The facts given in the *Veda* were not perceived, deduced, or formulated through reason, but were revealed to men possessing high extra-sensitivity, the *rsis*, and the *Veda* is, therefore, *sruti*, revelation, in contradistinction to *smriti*,—'that which is remembered,' the knowledge derived through sense-perception and ratiocination. This is the foundation of the processes of the religious and metaphysical thought in India.

4. Gautam the Buddha, twenty-five hundred years ago, repudiated the claim and validity of this *Veda* in its particular sense, and he also denied, by implication, the validity of the *Sabd*, non-human verbal sound, as a true source of knowledge. *Buddhi*, the enlightened, steadfast, dispassionate reason, was the source of the truth that Gautam, the Buddha preached. As is recorded in the *Māhāpāriniḥśāsana-sūtra* of the *Pāli Dīghānikāya*, when Subhadda, a Brahmin-philosopher met the Buddha at the banks of the river, Hiranyavati, as the Buddha was about to pass away, in answer to the question as to whether there were any other truths beyond the lore contained in the *Veda* texts and the *Sāstras*, the philosophical systems supposedly

1. *Manmukh patthar sail hai dhrig jiwan phika-Guru Granth, Asa. I.*

derived from the texts of this *Veda*, the Buddha replied : "This is not the time for such discussions. To true wisdom there is only one way, the path laid down by me. ...O, Subhadra, I do not speak to you of things I have not experienced. Since I was twenty-nine years old, till now, I have striven after pure and perfect wisdom ..." It is for this reason that Gautam the Buddha is described as a *nāstaka* in the Hindu texts, the one not only misguided but 'a deliberately false guide for confounding men and gods, both.'²

5. The disappearance of Buddhism from the land of its birth, about fifteen hundred years ago, is coeval with the reassertion of the doctrine of *Sabd* and the identification of the *Sabd* with the *Corpus* of the texts of the ancient Sanskrit literature known as, the, *Rig-Veda Sam-Veda*, Upanisads, etc. In this *Vedā* are also included aphorisms called, the *brahma-sutras* of Badrayana, the *rsi*. All the mighty currents of the Hindu religious developments that have taken place during the last fifteen hundred years or so originate from interpretations or the commentaries on these *brāhma-sutrās* by tall figures such as Samkra, Ramanuja, and Madhava, three great acaryas, the founders of the philosophical systems, known as *advaita*, monism, *vasistadvaita*, qualified-monism, and *dvaita*, dualism, the philosophic systems, from which the Vedantist, Vaishnav and Bhakti movements have flowed, throwing up such mighty figures as Caitanya, Tukāram, Jñāneswar, Tulsi, Kabir, Vivekanand and Ramatirth. It may truly be asserted that all these movements and the whole of this religious thought pyramid and activity proceeds from and is based on logic and grammer, *bhāsyas*, expounded on the *brahma-sutras*.

6. After twenty-five hundred years, after the Buddha, who was Siddhartha Gautam, Guru Nanak is milestone in the spiritual life of India, comparable in principle, to the phenomena of the revelation of the Vedic texts and the system of psychological discipline and intellectual

2. namo buddhaya suddhāya daitya dānava mohine-Valmiki Ramayana, II. 109, 34,

ratiocination of Gautam, the Buddha. Guru Nanak proclaims the validity of the doctrine of the *sabd* in a special sense and claims that the *sabd*-testimony which he prefers is independent, in its genesis and validity, of the ancient scriptural texts, called the *Veda*, but beyond that he does not explicitly go. He does not repudiate the truths enshrined in these scriptural texts. This point must always be borne in mind when understanding Guru Nanak, for a non-appreciation of this point has already resulted in endless confusion and misunderstandings. Unlike Gautam, the Buddha, Guru Nanak does not repudiate the validity of the *sabd* testimony. Like Gautam, the Buddha, he denies that the springs of truth have dried up for ever to mankind and that the mortals may do no more than interpret-reinterpret, exegetise with the aid of Logic and Grammar, the truths concealed and congealed, stratified and implicit in the ancient scriptural texts. With regard to the genesis of the *sabd*-testimony, the Guru asserts that the human beings are capable, each one of them, to experience the truths of which he speaks, provided he submits himself to a rigorous psychosomatic and spiritual discipline and provided certain transcendental conditions are favourable to him, called, the powers of Grace. The last hymn of the Japu, which is numbered as hymn 38, is a clear enunciation of this modified doctrine of *sabd*. This modified doctrine of *sabd* is of tremendous significance and power for the religious thought of India, and indeed, for the full unfoldment of the religious dimension of man. It preserves the transcendental character of Truth, but adds to it the concept of a growing knowledge of this truth, within the ken of human minds. Its primary interest is centred around the problem of the quality of living and the transformation and evolution of the human mind and experience, as distinct from the standard of living, which the modern politics-oriented man assumes is the whole of Truth. This doctrine of Guru Nanak is of such a large philosophic nature that it would be difficult to conceive of any historical or scientific discovery which would greatly affect it. The essential teaching of Guru Nanak, the essence of Sikhism, therefore, has nothing to fear from the two basic

and relentless activities of the modern Western mind, the 'higher criticism' and the 'scientific investigation'. The higher criticism consists of examination of the previous ideas and their alleged authorities, and the scientific investigation examines all things dispassionately, objectively, assuming nothing and testing everything. Guru Nanak bases his testament on no previous authority and concedes the possibility of the truths that he reveals, being tested by human mind, provided certain experimental conditions are present and provided.

7. Modern mind assumes that what is referred to as 'higher truth' of religious experience is either hallucination or result of 'wishful thinking', whatever the terms, 'wish' and 'thinking' might connote here. Karl Jung, for instance, informs us that if the mind asserts the existence of a 'Universal Mind', the mind that encompasses and informs all individuated minds—'*tisdai cānani sabh mahi cānanu hoe*' (*Guru Granth, Dhanāsari*, I.), it is because "there is no evidence whatever for the ability of the human mind to pull itself up by its own boot-strings, i.e. to establish anything transcendental." (*Introduction to the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, ed. Dr. Evantz-Wentz. Oxford, pp. 29-32). Bluntly put, the idea is that the so called, 'higher truth' is mere speculation because no one can have direct experience of it. The reply of the *Japu* is that here the point is missed. The issue is not one of *proving* propositions, as Kant has clearly shown cannot be proved, but of *understanding* them, which is a much wider faculty because it breaks down the separation of subject and object, to which faculty the *Japu* refers as the last rung of the process of knowing: *sunīā manīā mani kītā bhāo*.³ The position of the *Japu* is not that 'higher truth' is apprehensible by everybody's mental horizon, but that it is apprehensible through requisite discipline and training, for the only fully convincing proof is to have such experience for oneself, *sine experientia nihil sufficienter scri potest*.⁴ It is to this that *Kenopanisad*

3. *Sravan Manan nidhyasan* of *Brihadarṇyakenopanisad*.

4. Without experience nothing may sufficiently be known.

(II. 3) points out through the paradox : 'It is understood by those who do not understand it', meaning that experience and not argumentative demonstration establishes the 'higher truth', the *sabd* of the *Japu*.

8. First, that the 'higher truth' is not mere fantasy or hallucination or philosophical speculation but a fact of experience, and second, that the 'higher truth' is experienceable by every human being provided he successfully undergoes and practises the requisite psycho-somatic discipline, described in the *Stair*. 38 of the *Japu* : *jatu pahāra dhīraju sunīaru*, are the quintessential propositions of the *Japu*. That no mere 'authority' or dogma, but 'reason' and 'experience' are the proper 'stairs' by which man may ascend to the 'higher truth', is a fundamental of Buddhism, as is recorded in the Mahayan text, *Jñānasārsamucya*, as the teaching of Gautam who became the Buddha : *tapac, chedāc, niksat ca svaranam iva pandatah priksaya bhiksavo grahayam madavaco na tu gauaravat*, meaning, just as a sensible man first rubs against touchstone, heats and cuts through a piece of gold before accepting it as genuine, even so, an aspirant must experience the higher truth for himself and not accept it merely on the authority of Gautam, the Buddha. The *Japu*, while deprecating mere dogma, in the requisite psychosomatic discipline it recommends, retains the role of 'reason' under the control, and guidance of the revealed, guide-lines available to mankind *āharani mati vedu hathiaru* and with this the modern enlightened man can have no quarrel since he now is aware that, thanks to Sigmund Freud, that rationalisation, this counterfiet of reasons, is a child of the emotional complex of the individual's character and not a clear and sovereign light of guidance in its own right. While Buddhism affords no indication of its awareness of this truth about human faculties, *Japu* takes an explicit note of it by teaching that the 'higher truth' can be hammered out for the purpose of grasping by the human mind on 'the anvil

of emotional obfuscations under the constant guidance of God.' Individual, unguided reason, uninformed with the light, that is, the Guru's teachings, is self-stultifying. Did not Spinoza say, long before our prophets of the modern Depth-psychology, that "What Paul says about Peter tells us more about Paul than Peter" ?

9. That the 'higher truth' may be experienced and reached, not through the normal experience of an average man but only through an intense psychosomatic discipline, has been accepted and proclaimed as the 'ancient truth', *sanātan satya* in our country, a precept that has now universally become known as, Yoga, in the West. Such a claim has neither been discussed nor raised in Western science and philosophy. It was not contemplated by Greece, since classical times, though we can say neither one way or other about Orphism, Pythagorean teachings or the Eleusynian mysteries. It is rather unlikely, though, that there existed anything like the psycho-somatic practices elaborated in India, to experience the 'higher truth'. There are no references or indications justifying such an assumption in the art and literature produced within the ambit of Greek civilization. In the West, fantasy, such as is sometimes said to have inspired, cosmogonical mysteries of our Puranas in part, have not dwelt on such a human endeavour that seeks to grasp the higher apex of reality through a regulated *sadhana*. From Plato onwards, only the negative reflection is there that it is not possible to accomplish a real transformation of human nature, and the Judiac-Christian-Orthodox Islamic tradition that God and man are separated by an unbridgeable gulf is a logical corollary thereof. Freud who frankly admits (*Essays on Contemporary Events*, 1946) his impotence to influence the demoniac powers in modern civilisation, is only restating this basic attitude. The idea that man can be fundamentally transformed and uplifted, can become liberated from the conditioned existence and then by reverting to the world, can bring his weight to bear against the demons, is utterly foreign to the basic assumptions and conceptions of the Western mind and the modern man, and for him, therefore the assertions in the *Stair* 38 of the *Jopu* are either

mumbo-jumbo or downright puzzling. For the modern man, which has the twentieth century European intellectual as its prototype, the *Japu* opens up new and enchanting vistas of knowledge and states of consciousness such as are not only relevant to the human situation to-day but spell out the nature of the ultimate concern of man, as well as indicate out lines of likely solutions to tensions and frustrations that currently afflict the human society.

10. The *Japu* has 38 hymns or *pauris*, 'the stairs', containing a systematic and thorough exposition of the teachings of Guru Nanak, though, it bears repetition, a good knowledge of cultural history and metaphysical developments of Hindu thought is presumed in those to whom it is addressed. All the hymns of the *Japu* are metrical, on the pattern of the *Rig-veda*, with a severity of expression and economy of words, making the stanzas, kin-brothers of the ancient Sanskrit literary genre, *sutras*, a reason which has made the *Japu* the most difficult part of the Sikh scripture to understand. The line which forms the metrical unit, consists of varying number of syllables and in each line the number of syllables is constant, though the metrical unit is not identical in all 'stairs'. The concluding lines of a hymn are often of a different syllabic length. The metres like those of the classical Samskrit have a quantitative rhythm in which long and short syllables alternate. The rhythm of the last four or five syllables is rigidly determined. In their structure, they come half-way between the metres of the *Zend Avesta*, where the principle is the number of syllables only and the classical Samskrit in which the quantity of every single syllable in the line is fixed, except in the case of the *sloku*, the epiloquic conclusion.

11. The opening lines of the *Japu* constitute the *mul-mantra*, the basic tenets of Sikhism, embodying the Guru's ideas about the nature of the ultimate Reality. The *sloku* at the end is the revelation of Nanak, the Second Guru Angad, and forms a fitting epilogue to the *Japu* in the *Guru Granth*.

**CONTRIBUTION OF THE SIKH GURUS TO INDIAN
SPIRITUALITY**

delivered by
SHRI NIRMAL KUMAR JAIN

Lecture I

THE SIKH APPROACH TO HISTORY AND HERITAGE

(1) APPROACH TO HISTORY

The Gurus have not shown any contempt of history. In this they have not fallen in with the Indian tradition. Guru Gobind Singh went to the extent of recording history himself. Among the last pieces of advice Guru Gobind Singh gave to his disciples one was 'Read the history of your Gurus from the time of GuruNanak.'

The Gurus were ardent worshippers of God who is beyond time-Akal; Whom time affects not. Time and space are merely his play. His Maya projects them like two beautiful carpets to arrange His several gifts of creation. The Vedic seers, and Sankaracharya also, did not give any power to time over the Lord Himself. But the Gurus diverted from the Indian tradition in a major way. They did not, like the Hindu thinkers hold chronology in contempt. It appears that the Hindu mind began with a very noble plan of interpreting every temporal event so as to present it only as a form of the Timeless. Temporal events were of no importance to them. History came to be derided as a means of self-glorification on the part of certain kings. The task before mankind was to glorify the Lord. In all events and good deeds and behind all historical forces the race should be taught to discern will of God. The Hindus feared that if any importance was attached to history and its accuracy, the true purpose will be lost. It would degenerate into a means of glorifying man.

Ironically enough, in spite of these safeguards the true objective got lost. Memory came in their way. Common men preferred to retain in memory the temporal events and heroes. Thus what was denied to them by not writing an accurate history took the form of myths in the memory of laymen. History was still there but in a distorted form.

It was neither representing the Lord and His will nor was it serving as a reliable chronicle. Rather, it was playing with the memory of the race. As a huge serpent, myth took birth from the racial memory and coiled the soul of the Indians. This serpent further laid the spirit of India to a sweet slumber.

The Gurus pointed to this degeneration as they pointed to many others. They realized that refusal of History was one of the surest ways of blinding a race. It is human to want to know about the past. If we do not inform the people about the past they will fall on their imagination and build myths. They will also lose the track of historical forces. They will cease to learn from errors and will keep on repeating the same set of errors. The race will get arrested in its march. Its life-forces, finding the natural flow resisted, will take to exaggerations.

It should not be wrong to say that most of our evil customs and practices grew out of this self-blinding and ignorance of historical forces.

About the times and lives of Sikh Gurus, however, satisfactory details are available. In plain and simple colours, they have recorded the plight of people in their days. They have made no secrets about the life and deeds of their followers. It is candidly written how the *masands* had started harassing the people, so much so that the Tenth Guru had to punish them. It is, indeed, interesting to learn even such small details as that during the visit of Guru Gobind Singh to Chitor a quarrel broke out between the Rajputs and the Sikhs because the latter had taken some goats without paying for them. One reads the pleasant details of the arrival of Guru Angad at the house of Guru Nanak and the devoted service he rendered. At places, miracles are interwoven. For instance, when Guru Nanak says that Angad's new clothes are not soiled because of work in his fields, the mud on his clothes becomes saffron. Similarly, immediately after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, it is recorded that he was seen by a hermit on his bay horse. He had smiled at the hermit and said he was going to the forest on a hunting excursion. This reminded the Sikhs

of the promise he had made on his death bed that wherever five true Sikhs assemble, he would be with them.

Such miracles in Sikh history are however very few and therefore their effect is all the more salutary. They too render service to the Lord. One is touched by the essence of the sublime in them. To question their authenticity appears meaningless.

No history of medieval India presents so authentic an account of the people as the Sikh chronicles. The Mughal historians' efforts too often reflect a partisan spirit. They glorify many misdeed and distort events. But to pursue the simple narration of the times in Sikh books is to have a true picture of those days. The people come out of those pages as living beings. It is difficult to find elsewhere a more earthly and realistic account of the character of the medieval Indian people. One can see clearly the historical forces and their mutilations in the events presented.

The concept of the Gurus seems to have been the same as of the *Isopanisd*. Only he can truly know the Timeless who has undergone the discipline of the time तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यत because He who is beyond space and time is within them too. To consider God as merely transcendental was a spiritual error.

Henri Bergson has tried to show that memory was a psychological form of the time. The Vedas too have recorded that time has a tendency to entwine the human soul in its coils. The Jains believed time to be a type of subtle matter which settles on the soul. Memory, Prarabdha Karmas, Punya Karmas are all its manifestations. Similarly, the Gurus, believed that the human soul is bound in the coils of time. One who wants to seek release from it must learn the art of straightening the coils. Its coils are only as long as we insist on partiality, on interpreting events to prove partial truths. But when we aim at depicting the whole of truth which is the same as Love, time loses its serpent-form. The force of the whole of truth straightens it. One gets released from the prison-cell of time. Now he is fit to take a journey beyond time and to experience the truth that is Akal. Time is the prison house of the human soul and a

correct understanding of it is freedom from it. One who would try to reach the Timeless without paying its due to time will land into abstractions. He will go to the wrong direction of nothingness.

The Sikh history is, therefore, not aimed at giving an account of the glories and exploits of the Gurus. It candidly records the problems they faced, the treacheries they were subjected to. The recording has been to a great extent impartial. As a result the whole of truth, as it had become, as it should not have become, as the forces of ignorance, had made it, rises from those pages. How great should be the love in the soul of the Gurus that, accepting no blindness to facts, their actions have not emanated from wrath or hatred or a feeling of revenge. No such negative passion was allowed to reign in their soul. Action was justified only when it flew from love and compassion.

It will help in understanding the Sikh approach if we correctly understand the classical Hindu approach. In the ancient days, history was always transformed into legends, epics, puranas which were divine interpretations of facts. All history is extension or exposition of some idea of the historians. Gibbon's history of the Roman's, Spengler's history of western civilization are definite studies from a particular point of view. Toynbee had made it clear that no history can be written without some motive or idea behind it. The historical facts are given an order under the force of that motive. Marx has expressly given a materialistic interpretation of history. Modern historians are coming to the same conclusion to which the ancient Indians had come. History is no longer considered a useful study if it is a mere recording of the exploits of some ambitious individual. It was an inferior task relegated to paid chroniclers. Much above that, true historian is supposed today to see the march of human destiny beneath the individual scores. History is to record the rise and struggle of the common man, i.e., philosophically speaking of the soul of a people or the racial consciousness.

Exactly this is what ancient Indians—foremost among them Maharishi Vyas—were doing. They went a step ahead.

It was with them not only the unfolding of the spiritual genius of our race. It was mainly an attempt to attune it to what they considered to be the divine message i. e. Satyameva Jayate. Every historian picks up events to suit his narrative. No historian can claim to have put facts as they were without giving them colours. But what if the events come to him already coloured? The case is such more than often. It is human nature to add imagination to facts. Whatever facts a race preserves in its memory get automatically coloured by the imagination and memory of those people. Memory has its own colours and so has imagination. Howsoever dispassionate we may be, the very placing of a thing or person in memory will transform them. These are basic characteristics of our faculties. Call them human frailties, if you like.

The ancient Indians did not prefer to fight against nature for giving man such unreliable faculties which tended to give their own tinge and hue to things kept in them. They rather rejoiced in what God has made of man. Instead of lamenting about the lack of objectivity in the memory faculty, they gave it a motive after ensuring that it was noble and it was for the good of all. It was certainly too big a task and no person other than seers and visionaries could have done this. Hence the task of interpreting history was left to Godly persons who had no fear and no desire for wordly gains, rather whom those in power feared because of the powers attained by them through penance. Hence we see one single name, Vyasa, as the master-historian of the race. A countless number of seers have contributed to the writing of Indian history in the form of Puranas but all in the name of Vyasa. These holymen trained their vision and mind so that they could perceive the divine mission in the human drama. Their duty was to project this divine mission.

Later came the age of downfall when visionaries of that stature were to be found nowhere. As a result, history was no longer interpreted. The Indian people were no longer informed of the steps they had moved in the cosmic whirlpool. The racial mariners lost their compass. As if lost in

a rudderless ship, on a frosty cold night, the race started moving scattered, in a panic. Their actions and struggles lost their mission. They did not know what actions would lead them ahead on the divine road which they had taken at the dawn of civilization. It is at this time that Guru Nanak appeared. Like a serpent lulled in its coils, he saw this racial consciousness resigned, confused, blinded. All the noble virtues it had developed, after sacrificing millions of brave men and women were turning into negative forces because of this self-with drawal. Ahimsa, non-self-assertion, humility, in this mood of self-with drawal, had become death instincts for they are virtues only with a brave and aggressive soul.

Guru Nanak and after him all the nine Gurus took upon themselves the task of feeding the people again on their history. They were not to swallow suppression and injustice. They were to remember the great men who had stood for human virtues and the divine mission. The Gurus thus took upon themselves the task of training memory for regaining the old lost vigour. The fanatic approach of the rulers was exposed and challenged. They had known that it was no good to conceal the wrongs. Such concealment does no good to man. They only strengthen forces of tyranny and ignorance for it is their characteristic to get violent on being ignored.

The task before the Gurus was one of the most difficult that man faced ever. It was to give a suitable reply to atrocity and meanness without resorting to atrocity and meanness. The entire Sikh legend is an exposition of their masterly art by which they faced fanaticism and malice without leaving the road to love, i.e. God. It was more than a crusade. It would be an insult to give the name of a crusade to the wars of the Gurus. It was much more than that. It was a sublime attempt perhaps made for the first time in human history to fight forces of evil without losing the human soul. Much as I try to see into the history of mankind, I find no parallel to this great upsurge of the Sikhs. The point of beauty in it was the central adherence to human virtues.

The Gurus taught even the tyrant to realize the enormity of his deed. In doing this they had no other force to dwell upon except love and its accompanying virtues of courage and fortitude. Love in them was no longer a weakling force. It was not left to sentimental and gloomy hearts, destined to a doom. Love was to be a power of victory. It had to be successful on earth. The wicked had conspired to popularize the faith that the fate of love was despair, sorrow and failure. The Gurus challenged this counsel. They said if love is God and if the universe is his creation, how can love be sealed to a fate of despair and failure? Is it not a conspiracy of those many who had no illumination of love in their dark souls? Have they not exploited the simple and believing nature of those human beings in whom God has appeared as Love?

Thus the Gurus exploded an ancient myth which had become a part of our race. It was the myth that the fate of love was failure and tears. They saw the wicked motive that had given birth to it. It is the greedy, unilluminated among men who first thought of ruling over mankind. They developed the art of exploiting their simple faith and trust in their great brethern. They knew that they had the power of love in them and also simple faith and were for self-sacrifice. If the three could be combined together into a mood of retreat and self-destruction, the kingdom of earth would automatically become theirs. Hence the popular belief that love was a divine power which does not succeed in this world. But those who walk on the road of love are definitely rewarded in the other world. God wants them to sacrifice themselves in this world to enter His kingdom of love.

The Gurus saw the design behind it. They realized that it was no design of God. It was a myth given by those who wanted to rule over their brethern. Hence they gave the new slogan....."Love is meant to succeed in this World." Love is God and this world is His creation. Is He to be banished from His own creation? Carve a road with your spears for Him and instal Love as the victorious King, as the Lord in the centre of the world.

Nowhere in human history a band of philosophers wielded sword with such dexterity. The passage of Space and Time which leads to this world is too narrow. Love does not like it for it looks to it below its dignity. This is supported by the wicked one's in the world who do not want that it should enter and succeed in the world for it mitigates their chances of victory and glory.

The Gurus performed a two-fold task. First, they humbled love to foresake its divine pride and be prepared to enter the narrow and mean looking passage of space and Time. This was accomplished by the fact that none of them was a born prince. Their parents were all humble folk. So far all great men in India—like Rama, Krishna, Tirthankaras and Buddhas—had been born princes. The birth of Gurus showed that humble houses could also enshrine the divine light. Love resolved for the first time to stoop and enter a narrow passage even though it had no lust or selfishness.

The second important thing the Gurus did in this regard was explosion of the myth that love was not a force meant to be successful in this world. On the contrary, they said that it was meant to be successful only in this world. For outside it, there was nothing except God. If a Jivatma manages to get free of this vortex of life and death, straight it gets merged in the Lord. Thus, love means nothing for that world where everything is merged in the Lord. Sach Khand was no place of action for it for there it was already one with God. Love was a force meant for this world, i.e. the Dharam Khand. This was indeed a revolutionary idea for the practical world. Only a line of philosopher-war could have enthroned it in a greedy and misguided world. They sought to win the earth back for man. It was given to man to live by the divine light, i.e. Love. The Gurus vowed that they would not let any other force rule in this world.

I think you have some of the finest examples of the soldiers of light in the Sikh history. They rose like fierce waves in the Indian ocean. But even as the ocean does not break its bounds, so the Gurus in spite of the frightening battles and surge of passions and anger, never once

crossed that Maryada. They never showed any passion to become rulers. Their aim has been only to instal love as the ruler on earth. Indeed this accomplishment of the Sikhs has not been properly evaluated. When history finds its proper pen and when it shall be interpreted by someone of the vision of Vyas, he will assuredly give proper place to the Sikh ardour.

1. Approach to Heritage

Like every original religion, Sikhism is born of a direct revelation. As it does not derive from any established creed so does it not fight any preceding religion. On the contrary, the approach has been of enlightened growth from within the Indian heritage.

It would not be far from truth to call the Gurus completely original. Originality, as Goethe said, is not in having nothing from others. It is in the use we put those gifts to. Originality is direct communion with God.

The social institutions of Hindus were however direct targets of attack for the Gurus. The higher-caste ideology, the *sati* custom and the various rituals in the name of religion they rejected. They were highly critical of them.

O unwise man, be not proud of thy caste
For a myriad errors flow out of this pride.

Guru III, Bhairo Rag

It is mere nonsense to observe caste
To feel proud over grand pedigree.

Guru I, Sri Rag

Caste and distinctions depend upon
One's actions and deeds.

Guru I, Prabhati Rag.

The holy saints who have been honoured by including their hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib belonged to several different castes. Namadev was a washerman and Kabir a weaver. Dhanna was a jat and Trilochan a vaisya. No distinction is observed between them.

Surely shall I go with the lowest of the low
I shall go with them.

Nanak, Bhairo Rag.

2. Women

The approach of the Gurus towards woman is another indication of the uniqueness of their message in an age when authority, both religious and intellectual, had consigned her to a low level. Sankaracharya had called them the gateway of hell. Tulsidas had classed them with the cattle and the anti-culture and had prescribed rough behaviour towards them.

Whatever the original teachings of the Vedas, the Tirthankaras and the Buddhas, there is no doubt our racial consciousness had developed a derogatory sense for woman. Some of the *rishis* in Vedas and Upanisads were women and according to the Svetambaras one of the Tirthankaras was a woman. But this enlightened approach does not seem to have succeeded in forming part of our racial consciousness. What filters into the consciousness is of greater importance for a race than what its great men actually thought. If the Vedic and Nirgrantha seers had given an equal status to woman, there must have been some hesitation or lack of effort somewhere for the idea has not travelled down the roots of life in this form. Woman had come to be regarded as a positive hinderance in the spiritual journey.

It appears that after a brief sunny spell of the Vedic age, eclipse set on the fate of the Indian woman. An *arya* could wed both *arya* and *anarya* girls; but the right to sit in the Yajna was confined to the *arya* wife alone. This must have created family troubles and gradually in order to regain homely peace, in face of an inflexible priestly class, the householders must have found an easier solution in debarring the *Arya* wife also from taking part in Yajnas. There had been betrayals as is natural when two races come together. Mutual fear and distrust ultimately resulted in mass-scale decisions not to send girls out for education. Thus the two main streams of keeping them on a par with man, i.e. education and religious participation, were cut off from woman. Soon she was thrown into the labyrinth of superstitions, follies, obstinacies and imbalanced attachment to worldly belongings.

Instead of condemning woman for this, the Gurus asked

for the creation of natural and normal conditions for her. Unless this was done it was vain to accuse them.

Guru Nanak said :

Why should we call her evil

Who gives birth to kings and great man ?

Asa Rag.

The Sikh effort has been to allow woman a free and uninhibited participation in spiritual as well as in ordinary life. They were allowed to express boldly even their follies. When Guru Nanak puts Angad, a guest, to work in his field, his wife protests against such unbecoming treatment of a guest. It is highly significant and meaningful that Guru Nanak does not use any harsh word even though the charge was born of utter ignorance. As we teach children patiently, so he only shows his wife that what she considered mud was only the saffron of God. To me this anecdote typifies the Sikh approach to woman.

Above all appears that the Gurus have advocated identity of love between man and woman as the way of spiritual uplift. "It was vain to live merely together as husband and wife"—thus sang the Third Guru in Suhi Rag, "They alone form a true pair who become one soul in two bodies."

The true life of a couple is to cast off the individualities of man and woman and get awakened, reborn and recast in the fire of Love. This is a way to break through the hard core of *'haumey, ahamkara*. It appears to me that the Gurus have given a very bold and practical way to lay couples. Ramanada also talked of awakening love in the soul as it existed between Vishnu and Lakshmi. Parmanand also spoke of love as it existed between the Gopis and Krishna. Kabir had also idealized true love between man and woman. It was for the Gurus, however, to say that true love for God could be pictured best as the love that existed between love-lorn lass and her lover.

It is a known historical fact that all the Gurus lived with their families. To renounce the life of a householder and become a recluse was meaningless to them. None of them went to forest in search of enlightenment. They felt that the

forces that led the human soul astray were fear, pride, lust, anger and ignorance. These could afflict one in the forest as much as in the home. The real thing was therefore the urge to conquer them. This meant the awakening of a love which would not be misguided, intrigued or frightened by them. It is not mere spiritual strength that led to salvation. One who wants Liberation shall make only love strong in the spiritual world. All spiritual powers are not conducive to Nirvana. It is love alone which awakens wisdom in the soul. The spiritual powers are as much capable of leading us astray. To be spiritual is no guarantee of being near God. One could have a thoroughly spiritualized *haumey* or *Ahamkara*.

The Gurus have tried to build a road for couples on which both could walk hand in hand. It is for this reason a very revolutionary creed for most of the religions in practice have created a gulf between the two. Their mutual attraction has been universally called a snare which leads people away. The Gurus said that it is not always so and it should never be so. What Brahma had told Manu and Shatrupa, the first couple, seems to have been given a practical form by the Gurus. They were to carry on the aim of human life. It was not only procreation. Above every biological and social function was the aim to tune their life and mind in such a manner that they become means for the expression of divine love. It is possible to awaken this divine love for human beings. Nay, in fact, divine love is divine only as long as it expresses itself for fellow beings. It is not worship in isolation or the turning of beads. Hence so much emphasis in Sikhism on service. Divine love is not expressed towards the Invisible alone. The pining for the Eternal light is the source of the inspiration and awakening of the soul. Once kindled it finds expression in the service of man, in the love we have towards each other.

The Third Guru, Amar Das has composed several songs which elaborate the Sikh approach to woman. A great emphasis has been laid on the faithfulness of a wife to her husband. The spouse is her ornament and beauty both. If she is not true to him, there is no happiness for her either

here or hereafter.

"She who is devoid of virtue", says the Third Guru, "and who is attached to a second love shall burn in Sawan". At another place he says, "The beloved Himself hath adorned good wives."

Attempts have been made to show that woman, according to Sikh scriptures, has been given a subservient role. The highest good for her has been said to be service to her husband. Further analysis will show that it is a very narrow reading and it rather totally distorts the spirit of Guru Granth Sahib.

We should read these injunctions with the following utterance, again of Guru Amar Das :

"In this world there is one male, all the rest are females."

The refrain of the Sikh hymns referring to woman is mostly of a spiritual nature. It would appear that the word 'Woman' in them mostly stands for the human soul and the word 'Husband' for God.

A little further analysis will show that the Gurus have prescribed three loves for a woman. One is God, another is Guru and the third her earthly husband. The three have to be realized simultaneously. She has to awaken only that love in her heart for a man which reconciles her with the Guru and the Lord.

"Nanak, she who hath the Everlasting Male as her Husband is holy, and shall ever be a happy wife."

"No one is equal to her whom the creator enjoyeth".

"Happiness dwelleth in her heart who loveth the true Guru".

These pieces from the Holy Granth Sahib show that the same discipline has been prescribed for man and woman. No distinction whatsoever has been made. It would be wrong to infer that a woman shall attain salvation by serving sincerely a worldly husband. Unless her love for him is reconciled with her love for God and Gurus, she cannot attain realization. Woman has been thus given an equal status. Not only that man goes astray by indulging in the snares of a worldly life.

A woman too gets lost by serving the thoughtless whims of a worldly husband.

At another place the scripture says, "She who serveth the Male and destroyeth pride, verily, by the word, becomes a male herself."

This line is of great significance. It opens another side of the issue. The female is to flower into the male. This is, again, not a biological metamorphosis. The language of the holy book has the soul as its object not the body. The soul given to man is female. By its ardent love for God it partakes His own nature. From passive it becomes active. It participates in His functions and, as Guru Gobind Singh did, it even goes to help the Lord in re-writing the destiny of a people. The sorrowful tear like story of the oppressed Indian was transformed into a saga of glory and valour because one of them had become a male by the fire of his soul. The ardent love of Guru Amar Das for God, the male, went so far that he did not hesitate to address himself and other Gurus as if they were all females :

"Come my sisters,

I am a sacrifice to her (the Guru) who shall show me my Beloved."

Men and women as biological entities have no meaning for Sikh religion. It is the soul within that alone matters. Man has therefore no right to subjugate women to his will. The only task before both is to come closer in such a way that their prides are cast off. As it happens, a new soul awakens in both, where, to use an Upanisadic phrase so often used by the incomparable doyen Ananda Coomaraswamy 'each is both'.

"They are not husband and wife," says Guru Amar Das, "who sit together. Rather are they husband and wife who have one soul and two bodies."

Sikhism accepts the phenomenon of total merger, total union between man and a woman. This is possible only by the awakening in both of a subtler soul before which their individual selves look like outworn clothes.

Man and woman have to awaken that love which pierces

them through and kills their selves. "Only those," says Guru Granth Sahib, "who while alive are dead, understand God's order. Nanak who dieth such a death shall live for ever."

It is that philosophic death to which Tirthankara Adinath and several Nirgrantha munis have made repeated references. It is the same which was known to Plato. Sikhism has accepted the word Nirvana in its traditional meaning. It is to them the same what it is to Vardhamana and the Buddha. It is 'dying out'. But dying out of what? Of *haumey*, the ego, the narrow self. It is only after the death of this narrow self that the true self awakens. The same light which first appears shrouded and dubious, reappears in the brave as clear and bright. From this one has to shake hands with death. It is not death of the body. It is death of the psyche, a much more difficult thing. It is only the fearless who can attain it. A man and woman dead in this manner reawaken as a single flame of love. Their soul partakes the hues of the Lord. It is this which a true Sikh woman is to aim at.

The attempt everywhere of the Guru is to inspire the ordinary details of life with a new meaning. Until truth shines and beauty illuminates they have not been freed from worldly shadows.

I would dwell upon one more point in this context. Guru Amar Das says :—

"She who maketh fear and love her decorations shall by the Guru's favour obtain God in her own home."

Apparently it should be puzzling to read the advocacy of fear in a creed totally devoted to fearlessness. But on seeing a little deeper, the anomaly fades. Fear is the inheritance of man from an insecure and wild ancestor. This gift comes to him unwanted. Woman is more naturally susceptible to it. Fear was a gift to man. How to get rid of it? By making an offering of it to the Lord Himself. From Him all passions spring. The passion of fear sprung from Him on the demands of our ignorant ancestors. The Gurus taught women the art to return it to God Himself. To fear Him is the same as to get rid of fear. He is illumination and wisdom. He is kindness and love. Such

a being can never exploit another's fear. We had better direct this faculty to Him. If we do not do so, fear shall still be there sleeping in the unconscious recesses of our soul. Any tyrant will reawaken it to suit his purpose. The passion of fear is not to be left alone. Anything that we have is bound to express itself whether we will it or not. Better we will it and will with knowledge, for thus you make it subservient to wisdom. Its destructiveness gets checked.

To fear God is a necessary item of spirituality. It is a process of taking rebirth from the agonizing past. It is coming out of the womb of time. It is an entry from time to the timeless, from Kal to Akal.

It is a very practical and sure approach to utilize our weakest points in a way that they too form our strength. The carvers of human destiny have always chosen this course. Fear is the weakest side of man. It does not disappear by merely resolving not to fear. All our present day cruelties and cynicism are nothing but mutilations of fear on being suppressed. Modern psychology has established that the lib. movement among women, the new wave of paganism and black magic, the hysterical modern music and forms of amusement and the valuelessness in our society are all expressions of some deep-seated fear. All our science, civilization and humanities have not been able to remove the pangs of fear. We do not wear it openly for it looks undignified and therefore it lives in us in concealment. No wonder that the Gurus did not teach to suppress fears as the common custom was. They asked on the contrary to expose them constructively and harmlessly. For this they taught women to fear God. One who fears Him need not fear anymore. Said Guru Arjan Dev.

"He who remembers the Fearless,
Has all his fears destroyed".

(3) Will

Will is another subject on which the Gurus have dwelt largely

"That alone happens what He wills,
For nothing is in the hands of man."

(Nanak)

Guru Nanak prays :—

“May Thy will be sweet to me.”

The Sikhs believe that the world is the manifestation of God's will and it is surrender to His will alone that takes one off the tossing waves of the worldly ocean. He is playful. When He wills *maya* springs from Him and the colourful play of life begins. One of the beguiling items of this play is individual will. The great will has projected Himself in several individual wills at war with each other. Man is lost in a cobweb of wills. He wills something. His near and dear ones will something else. His enemies will still some other thing. A confusing and conflicting life is the result. Will contradicted produces anger, hatred, and violence. Lust, greed, gambling are off-shoots of our will. Cruelty, madness, pride are the products of a victorious will. Thus whatever befalls a man in pursuing his will is a bondage and a snare. The wise get out of this spider's web by trying to know the will of God. They surrender all their actions to Him. Thus the same divine will becomes a raft for the pious to take them out of the play of Wills.

“Neither I wish to live in heaven
Nor I am afraid of hell
Let thy will be done.”

(Kabir)

Will has been recognised since ancient times the cause of man's bondage. The ancient religions therefore taught the destruction of desires, motives and all other forms of will. Sikhism, the youngest religion, spoke differently. It is not enough, the Gurus said, to seek a course of individual deliverance when millions are ensnared. It is escapism to seek for individual salvation. The salvation has to be of the entire race. Millions of fishes have been caught in the net of will. To cut the threads only for myself with the sharp sword of love is to leave other suffering souls in their misery. A brave hero has to choose, even as Yudisthira chose, to suffer in hell with his brethren than to seek a lonely heaven for himself. For this the Guru discovered a way not of escape from will but of using the net itself as a means of

deliverance. They realized that in the mysteries of the psychological world a change in the weaving pattern turns the web itself into a means of freedom. This could be done by meditating on His Name. Realize Him as Love in your heart. Then a new pattern of wills shall unfold itself in your heart, from this love. Turn the pattern of wills in the world in accordance with the pattern that your heart has realized in the light of love. For this, if need be, you can wield a sword and mount a steed. Let the world be a divine play of will. In that form human souls shall not be subjected to inhuman sufferings and wicked subjugations. The Lord has not created such sufferings for man. He is merciful. The pains that He gives are meant only to kindle the fire of love in us. He thus brings back the lost children to the right road. All other sufferings issue from this hybrid spider. On the one hand it destroys faith in God by giving inhuman tortures to man. On the other hand it wastes human soul in meaningless sorrows without letting it suffer for love. All our lives get wasted in the agonies of bread earning and political safety. The real aim of life does not begin and death comes to pluck us silently. To carve a world for the ordinary man where the wicked will does not waste our life-energy was the task the Gurus took upon themselves. To fulfill this objective a great transformation took place within Sikhism. Earlier it believed in what saint Farid said, "If anyone strikes you with his fist do not strike back." This hymn forms a part of Guru Granth Sahib. Up to the time of Guru Gobind Singh the approach changed completely. The times had changed and experience had taught more secrets of the working of the wicked will. There was no point in sticking to the old approach. The tenth Guru translated Durga Saptasati from Markandeya purana. He gave a new form to the worship of the goddess in "Bhagauti Ki War" and "Chandi Charitar". Bhagauti did not mean the ancient goddess of that name for him. It meant the sword. "Bhagauti represented the will of God. Since ancient days Shakti has been appearing as the practical divine force which aims at restoring the order of the world in accordance with the will of God.

One of the ways is to expose the wickedness of the dominating wordly will. It has a tendency to conceal itself under a noble and acceptable visage. A true seeker has not only to realize this trickery. He has to expose it as well so that the common folk do not believe its exterior. For this they had to face persecution. For this they had to die at the hands of the tyrants. The persecution done by the rulers of medieval India is a fact of history.

Guru Nanak made no pretence or concealment of facts. His anguished soul cried :—

“Way is there none
 Darkness Surrounding
 King’s with a butcher’s passion
 The bird of justice O, Father
 Where hath it fled ?
 Weep I in despair
 The moon of truth my eyes see not
 O the Times, Such times.”

The dominating mood of the religious world was madness in those days. A true Guru had to tear down all beautiful veils from this vile face so that made-up beauty does not conceal its inherent ugliness. They knew that this will arouse racial will. They will know the real motives of the historical and political powers that were playing on their lives. This will spontaneously release forces from the racial will which would aim at overcoming it. He spoke of it alike to Hindus and Muslims. His aim was not to fire their baser passions, but to awaken the sleeping Truth, i.e. the divine love, for once awakened, it recognizes neither Hindus nor Muslims. In awakening it we become it. Our passions, thoughts, infact all our faculties, are recharged with a different meaning and motive.

One important and unique thing about Sikhism is that it does not teach suppression of baser passions. Only the light that illuminates them is to be changed. When Raja Hari Chand discharged an arrow which pierced the buckle of his waist-belt it kindled the anger of Guru Gobind Singh, as described himself, to a big blaze.

Lal Chand was a *Khatti* who knew no arts of battle.

Seeing his enthusiasm Guru Gobind Singh gave him a sword and shield and asked him to run into the warring Pathans. Bhikan Khan cut a joke, "here comes an Arora, just fresh from weighing flour and salt. The Guru has given him a sword." Upon this Mir Khan pounced on him but Lal Chand made two of what was one Mir Khan. To kill hawks with sparrows was the slogan of the Guru. One in whom the love of God is kindled is worth a million well trained soldiers. The Guru drew men even from the lower castes, taught them the use of arms and restored to them their human dignity.

It would be erroneous to say that violence has any attraction for a true Sikh soul. "A life devoid of love is a flower blooming in the wilderness." A people who could sing thus cannot be fairly charged with any adherence to violence. The spirit is more non-violent than non-violence itself. It is love. They aimed at the triumph of this spirit rather than adherence to a specific conduct.

LOVE AND GRIEF

To the Gurus sorrow belongs to the world of shadows. It is Maya. It is only a form of expression. No sanctity should be attached to it. Rather by an act of will, the true lover should discipline himself so that no circumstance succeeds in producing sorrow from his love. Sorrow as a form of Maya has a tendency to attract violence. Maya clears her account rather too quickly. After appearing as sorrow she appears as brutal violence. It is aimed to wipe out sorrow. But the poor human soul gets involved in its a-human play. It sees sorrow as its part and therefore violence too appears to it as its part. Thus sorrow and violence become two essential parts of love. The history of human love has therefore always been written with tears and cruelties.

A true seeker on the path, which is like the razor's edge, shall never choose grief as his companion. The eyes of Guru Tegh Bahadur shine in no grief when he sees his dearest disciples being executed before him. Sorrow is not the essence of things, the Gurus would say. They do not seem to agree with the Buddhists on this issue. Sorrow is a form of maya. It looks too genuine. It has the power to touch our heart. This should not mislead us into believing that it

is part of reality. The real is love and nothing but love. The wise choose joy as their expression, peace and contentment as their robes rather than sorrow. They do so in order to arrest the movement of the vortex of life and death. They aim at turning the wheel in another direction. They want to make joy as the fast companion of Love. They want love to succeed in this world of shadows too. They are not satisfied with the ultimate conquest of man. They want the immediate conquest too. Sorrow should be a companion of the wicked and the tormentor, not of the human hero, i. e. the lover. A clever calculation done by the wicked has linked sorrow to the fate of a lover. The Gurus called human destiny to change sides. It is a demand of fair game too.

Even though grief springs from the deepest core of love and makes a very satisfactory expression of it, yet the wise should always see in it a play of shadows, with no substance. It is only a touching face of Maya. Mankind has not yet learnt to make joy as deep an expression of Love as sorrow. As a result the finest and highest experiences of a human soul are bedewed with tears. A new sparkling laughter has to flow from the soul. Only he can do so who has realized the Lord as love alone. It is a pity that Nietzsche knew nothing about the Gurus. Was not the dream that maddened him and drove him out of human limits already realized in the Gurus ?

Obstacles and closure of all roads to love are an unreal phantasm according to the doctrine of the Gurus. It often disheartens a lover. But a true seeker must train his will to see in them merely a play of Maya. He should realize that there is no force other than the Lord Himself and since He manifests Himself as Love, all forces blocking its passage are illusory. A weak soul believes them to be real and is caught in the fourfold play of Maya. This belief generates grief and disappointment. These in turn arouse apathy and violence. Then comes a false conduct which excites a soul in despair and celebrates its fall. A true believer will not become a prey to this scheme. Even in utter failure and apparent ruin he shall not lose his faith in the immortality of love. Such a one can alone cross the turbulent sea of life and death.

More real than the events is the faith that faces them. More powerful than all scheming forces is the faint breath of love in a true heart. One who knows this coverts all obstructing forces into slaves of love. "They go by the road", said Guru Amar Das, "which is sharper than sword and finer than a hair".

The third Guru sang in *Majh Rag* :

"Sure, sure salvation is his,
Whose heart brims with love."

Spiritual love has a tendency to become mystical. This has been the cause of ruin to many noble souls. Love becomes a mystery with them. This mystery promotes ritualism. All rituals pretend to be symbols of deep meanings.

The Gurus have not allowed their spiritual love to take the wings of mysticism. They have kept it shorn of elaborate mannerism and rituals. It is a simple language of the heart to them.

All mystery, as modern psychology says, tends to isolate its owner from the rest of mankind. Thus spiritual love of a saint has been glorified as a strictly secret union of the saint with God. But by this he gets isolated. People worship him and maintain a holy distance. This also leads to several perversions and complexes.

The Gurus took special care not to let their spiritual Love take any mystical flights. They made it very ordinary and earthly. They made it direct and simple. It could be practised socially not secretly. No isolation or forest was needed.

The spiritual love, according to the Gurus, was only concentration of our total being in love. It was only by this sign that it is recognised or distinguished from worldly love. No mystical halo or any secret mark distinguished it. They brought the highest type of love down to the earthly man, to the farmer and the soldier. This in itself seems to me to be the greatest service to God that they rendered.

LECTURE II

SIKH PHILOSOPHY

1. The Moral Fervour

One thing which distinguishes Sikhism from all other civilized religions is their positive and daring approach to anger, pride, desire, possessiveness and ignorance. From ancient days Indian seers have been denouncing them as evil. The Jains, the Hindus, the Buddhists, all alike have been preaching a conduct which should totally avoid these five deadly sins. The Gurus have also called them sins but their approach has not been one of avoidance but of conquest. In a way one could say that Sikhism is perhaps the only religion which has developed a monistic conduct. It is one thing to preach theoretically that God alone is truth, but to give a discipline to all human actions, based on this alone, requires spiritual boldness and a different vision.

There are several religions which preach that God alone exists. He alone is Sat. But if we examine their ethical system we find that they have a lurking fear of some force which is other than God. Call it sin or evil whatever you like. They have given it many names. They seem to be preaching that a virtuous man should avoid its snares or his soul is lost. Christianity and Islam have accepted this dark, anti-God, element of life, as Satan or the devil. A basic dualism has thus crept in those systems. It is of God and mammon. Whatever attempts Christian and Muslim philosophers and theologians might have made to re-establish monism, the fact remains that their practical life on all steps reflects belief in two supreme entities—one bright, luminous, kind loving and the other dark, wicked, cruel.

It goes to the credit of Hinduism that after having realized philosophically 'EKAM SATYA' that God alone is Sat or existent, they have not accepted the existence of the dark power against God. Neither Saivism nor Vaishnavism nor the Bhakti cult believes in the independent power of a dark being misleading man and taking him away from God. All the major puranas bear ample testimony to this. Dualism has been altogether removed from the realm of faith by believing that one of the powers of God is Maya and this power has the speciality of having too many forms without any substance.

A man's intelligence and Love—the two cardinal forces of divine birth—are lost in the mirage of Maya. It is not only wicked but often assumes shapes better in appearance than Sat, the existent, the real itself. A simile is drawn from the fact that an artificial diamond is brighter than the real diamond. A lay man is more likely to go for the artificial than for the real. The real Alladin lamp is lesser in shine and could be exchanged for an ordinary lamp because of the latter's better shine. This trade has been going on in the world ever since man has existed. Man has been giving up real love under the blinding light of the false one. It has been the pleasure of God to bestow such powers on Maya that she could take up shapes brighter than God himself. Maya could be called the Terrible Mother whom psychologists discovered in the last few decades. I will return to this subject later. I would like to say at present only that the religion of the Hindus differs from those religions who have accepted the existence of Satan and have thus created an irreconcilable rift of dualism in the soul of man.

But the Hindus also could not find a way to translate this belief into human conduct. If not their religion, their code of conduct or ethical system is very much based on an avowed dualism. A dichotomy persists in their faith and action. They do not believe that there is any other reality except God. God is both immanent and transcendental. Still their code of conduct does not show that they believe, these misleading forms of Maya—anger, desire, pride, possessiveness, ignorance

—also to be manifestations of God. Their faith must logically preach that these negative forces are mere outer forms and have no malice as their motive. The Fifth Guru said, "Nanak, none is evil." Thus was the dichotomy overcome in Sikhism.

It was left to the Sikhs to remove this dualism from the active life. If I want to avoid anger, pride, desire *etcetra* in my actions, I am bound to recognize these deadly five sins to be existent. Thus evil gets recognition from soul. The soul is Sat and whatever it recognises shall also become existent for it. In a mood of constant avoidance, the Hindus have given an independent existence to these five forces. The Hindu soul is obsessed by them. Maya has thus become for Hindus what evil or devil is for Christians and Muslims—a force anti-God. It was not intended to be such. It was only the step-mother in whose lap the soul is to play in order to acclimatize itself to the conditions of the world. Maya is only the Dragon-Mother, Sirsa, who is not to be opposed, for as Fischte said, opposition grants existence to the not-being. Hanuman takes rebirth from her by directing all his cleverness against her opposition. He does not fight her. He treats her with respect and manages to take rebirth from her by quickly coming out of the same mouth through which he entered. His attitude towards Sirsa is typical and this is perhaps what the Hindu genius had imagined to be the correct approach to Maya or Asat or Non-existent. He is neither afraid of her nor contemptuous. He is not angry either. He does not argue with her. He does not recognize her powers by surrender or attempt to destroy. All these four attitudes first go to establish the opposite as real. This benefit he does not want to give to Sirsa. She has a boon from Brahma that whosoever passes her way shall have to enter into her mouth as her food. Hanuman evolves an entirely original approach. He matches her determined obstruction with cleverness. The element of cleverness in man is given to him to face Asat. He has to use it as an instrument of love and as not an end in itself. The motive behind it is his Bhakti or love for Rama. It is love which is impetus and the prime-mover.

This further explains the Hindu concept of the evil as non-existent, *Maya*. It is not real. It becomes real only for the ignorant who hate or fear it or accept it or feel angry at it. One has to approach it with a sportsman's spirit. He fights the opposite side with all seriousness with a purpose to win. But this fight has neither hatred nor anger.

The Sikh ethics is typical in that, in the true Indian tradition, their attitude is not one of avoiding anger, hatred, possessiveness, desire, pride. By avoiding you establish them. The Gurus taught that emphasis should be on the substance and not on the form. Substance is the real. Form belongs to the realm of the unreal. Anger, hatred, etc., are mere forms. They will cease to be sins if you make them instruments of Divine light, i. e. love. The attitude of avoidance will give them a separate existence. It would be acting against the basic creed of monism. The only existing factor is God who is love. Man exists only as a spark of that light. Anger, desire, pride, etc., are non-existing entities. They are mere forms which ought to be utilized in the service of God. This is the only way to conquer them. If you fight the passions of anger, desire, etc., you make them resistant and stronger. If you directly subdue them they stealthily enter your inner soul and take their revenge in some of the weaker moments. The right way to conquer them is to make them slaves of the element of love in you. This element is soul or God.

It was a positive and scientific approach. The surrender of passions to love is not easy. It involves a cycle of psychological rebirths. The passions in their intense surge tend to eat up the human soul. The soul takes its rebirth from the eater only when it realized that the eater is unreal whereas the eater is real and the real cannot be eaten or destroyed. '*Nainam chidanti shastrani*'. It is only faith in God or love which can manage a rebirth for a brave soul from anger, pride and other deadly sins.

The Sikh Guru's saintliness is not in having destroyed anger, pride, etc.—something which perhaps is a mere myth. Their saintliness is in remaining thoroughly unaffec-

ted by these strong passions. Not for a single moment do they forget that they are mere soldiers of light. They have done penance not to curb human frailties but to let the divine spark merge. For them 'tapsya' does not mean any torture to body or any suppression of human infirmities. The Gurus realized that to walk on earth God has made man a queer combination of the things of light and shade. The so-called infirmity, if properly controlled and subjugated to the Divine light inside, proves to be an essential power to break the *chakravaha* of the wicked. They meditated on God with a firm determination to feel Him in their heart as love. It was the descent of God in Time and space. Perhaps nothing could be a better gift to posterity from a great man than piercing of the complex of space and time. In the playful scheme of things of God, Divinity in its pure, untainted form stays out of this complex. It is given to man to invite it or not, inside Time and space. The Gurus prepared their corporal frame to boldly invite the Lord. They realized it was not mortification of flesh that could do this. Human body is the epitome of creation. Whatever is there in it is in a miniature form. To regulate and discipline it in such a way that its negative urges get completely controlled requires a wedding with Death. This the Masters knew. The penance of Guru Angad and others is typical illustration of this. They do not go to the forest. They sit in their house like Guru Tegh Bahadur and meditate and realize the divine meaning of their existence. All the saints since the medieval days have been singing of the vanity of physical tortures and self-denial. The Gurus went a step ahead. They said that it is a matter of courage. One gets from God only what he dares. The sinews and veins, the very heart has to conquer fear of death and destruction if God is to descend or awaken in our body, for descent and awakening are equally imperfect expressions of a phenomenon which cannot be described perfectly.

The Gurus do not refer to the Chakras and Kundaline like the Yogis. By the time they appeared a countless number of Yogis had already met their doom by concentrating on the art of unfolding the upturned lotuses in the

Chakras They knew it was wrong to use any force to awaken them except courage. When courage surges, no Yogic effort is needed. By themselves the lotuses bloom as in the natural course. Courage is their Time-keeper. Courage is their master-Lord. It is mastery over Time which appears in man as courage*. Courage is born of a courting with death. 'I have shaken my hands with winter my friends. My hands are blue with his hand-shake.' So could the Gurus, say, to quote the language of Nietzsche.

The Gurus attached no special uniqueness to the life of one dedicated to God. Such a one was an ordinary being, too. Even the first Guru preferred to live as an ordinary farmer, working in the field with his two sons facing several doubts even disobedience from them—like an ordinary father. The Guru's lives were an exercise in courage,

It is difficult for man to brave the fears that surround human life. The fear of the blade and the bullet, of water and frosty winds and of the unknown fate are enough to break the courage of the strongest. But one who braves all these fears, gets reborn through them and he alone is given the subtlest fear, i. e. awe, which is known to have dazed the brightest saints. The Gurus had prepared themselves for this final encounter. The effect of awe could awaken no corresponding sensation in them. They had developed an eye in this careful long journey which had, as they say, "Kept watch over man's mortality." It was an eye of compassion and forgiveness. It was the eye of the divine. It could not flinch before awe. When the Master came in his million-horse-driven-chase, such dust and blinding awe was but natural. The Guru had awakened by the single power of courage so as to receive him with a step, unstaggered and firm.

Here is a religion of no negation. Nothing natural is forbidden. Even the hairs that grow naturally have not to be shorn off. Better remain close to nature or even Maya for the object is neither to question nor to fight Maya. The object is to outwit her. Singular fortitude and courage are required for such a game. It is this spirit which did not let malice or fear of personal grudge rise in the soul of the

Gurus. Still all the time they never forgot that they had to win. The lesson that Krishna taught in Gita had been most diversely and wrongly interpreted. "Thou hast not to desire the fruit". This command of the Lord had come to mean almost a murder of the motive. Our race had developed a faith in action for actions sake. The Rajputs would fight only for bravery and honour without ever making victory as their avowed goal. Even to this day a devout Hindu wants simply to do good deeds without a motive. Not to be bound by any desire of fruit or motive does not mean a destruction of it. It further means wastage of human powers in killing motives. Concentrate all your powers, even motives—this was the clarion call of the Gurus. Surrender your soul to God who is all light and love. Once you have done it you have not to fear the bondages of motives. Even motives shall serve the Lord. It was a simple philosophy which very much agreed with common sense and no wonder that thousands and thousands of people from all the four castes and even Muslims thronged at their feet to find the road which grants worldly glory and bliss in the same action.

Here the Guru's concept is very much akin to that of the Tirthankaras. Control your soul and you have controlled everything. Do not bother about your desires, thoughts or motives. The source of these all is the soul. Surrender it to the Lord. It is lazy by habit like a python. It just wants rest and therefore adjusts in every situation. Do not let it sleep. Do not let it compromise. It has to awaken and remain active. Unless the soul has surrendered its pride, its beauty cannot awaken which is the same as the Lord. Unless it has tasted the sweetness of God, it cannot realize what light is.

Joy is blinded and lost in its own follies. The soul shall keep on wandering from one life to another. But once it has experienced the flicker of love and once surrender has risen in it as its strongest passion, it gets into direct communion with the Lord and then all that it does or desires, no matter how ordinary it is, becomes an offering to the God. In his eternal fire everything gets renewed and transformed. Even a bloody battle becomes a sacred thing.

It is important to note that the Gurus have no where given any importance to Satyam, Shivam, Sundram. On the contrary this trio has been considered as the finest flower of all philosophy in the east as well as the west. Not only philosophers, but also poets called it so. Keats said :

Beauty is truth and truth beauty
That is all that ye know on earth
And all that ye need to know.

Instead of this trio, the emphasis of the Gurus has been on Sat, i.e. the existent, the real, the popular way for Sikhs to greet each other is : Sat-Sri Akal. There lies underneath a deep psychological meaning in this choice of the Gurus. It would seem that the main cause for the downfall of Hindu as well as Greek civilization was their emphasis on Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram. They considered this trinity to be the most secular face of God. But a closer examination would show that God is present in the human soul in a more elementary form than this trinity and this trinity is in fact an outer manifestation of that essence of God in us. God lives in us as Sat, as the Being. The ontological reality is here and now. It exists. We feel it in the form of our Being or Love. Truth is what this essence speaks. Beauty is the shine it imparts to our face and body when we allow it to live in us untarnished. Good is what it does without compromising with anything. As such Truth, Good, Beauty are Asat when placed against this essence of God in us, i.e. Love. Whatever is Asat or non-existent can be manipulated into other forms. Truth is Asat for it express the True One. It is not the true one. The Sikh slogan has been therefore : 'More important than truth is a true man.'

2. Beyond Time 'Akal'

They called Him beyond Time—akal. This was for the first time that God was worshipped as Timeless. No doubt this is one of the many names attributed to him. But it is the Gurus who enshrined this name. To remember Him as the one whom Time cannot touch being itself only a manifestation of His, was highly exciting and hopeful to a race in despair. Time seemed endless for they were hard times

indeed, when the foreign rulers had established on the soil. Life hung on a thread. There was darkness all around. To worship Him as Brahman was not enough to wipe the gloom from the eyes of the common man. It did not enter the dark recesses of time where his soul was imprisoned. But it was really heartening to learn that the divine cannot be touched by time and is greater, in fact is the creator of time and that in this insignificant enslaved, dishonoured body of ours lives none else but He Himself as our individual soul. Thus even we cannot be touched by time.

The feeling of a slave mother often create feelings of humiliation in her brave son. Her joys and woes look petty to him as they are all connected with her master. Their narration provokes contempt in him. The communication between the mother and the son gets broken. The son also feels small in going and asking from someone the thing that he most needs. Circumstances often weave such a web that he cannot get it otherwise. He resorts to momentary pleasures or stealing of the desired thing.

This state of affair had come to be between India and her brave sons before the advent of the Gurus. India has been a cultural unit for thousands of years but those brave sons had forgotten the face of their mother out of shame. The Rajputs in Rajasthan, the Punjabis in Punjab, the Marathas, the Southern people had all lost the ingrained sense of belonging to the same mother. Mother India was no longer the pious goddess like mother whose hairs spread over the white neck of Himalayas and whose lotus feet were washed by the ocean. She had been dishonoured, raped, looted and enslaved. All her glory was shed. She was a slave woman. Therefore her sons preferred to call themselves by their province or city rather than as Indians. This break of communion between the mother and the sons had its worst effect on the woman-folk. They carried the tales of the woes and joys of Mother India in their songs and talks, finding no response in man. It seemed as if men, in their pride did not want to remember their dishonoured and raped mother.

In medieval days in India communion broke down between women and brave, virtuous and learned men. Women

started being considered as the companion of the courtier. With no higher destiny to pursue. It was the same woman who had been a companion of man in his highest pursuits in ancient days. A Yajna by Shri Ram without Sitaji was considered incomplete. Yajnavalka had made his wives Maitreyi and Gargi constant companions of his philosophic adventures. Pandavas had made Kunti and Draupadi regular guides in their wars against Kauravas. In fact the best philosophers and rishis and warriors had been inspired and guided by woman. Such was the faith in women and her virtuous being that Rama staked everything to protect the honour of his wife and brave Pandavas forgot everything except the vow to revenge the little act of dishonour that had been done to their common wife. They accepted the provocations aroused by Draupadi as wise pieces of advice.

But in the medieval days no such faith was left in woman even though thousands of them had started turning themselves to prove their chastity in Rajasthan. All this sacrifice could not succeed to win a place of honour even for a single woman, as friend, philosopher and guide to some great thinker or warrior. Shankaracharya, the greatest intellectual of medieval days denounced them outright. So did the greatest poets of middle ages. Woman came to be considered as a positive hindrance in higher pursuits. The philosophers, poets and warriors were no longer interested in the freedom of India. They had left Mother India, and, as a natural sequence, women to their confusion, sorrow and folly. They were in search of a heaven away from her. Their philosophy therefore grew wings and became more and more abstract. The fine synthesis of this world with the other was lost. The warriors did not think of the honour of India. They were busy with petty quarrels and personal glorification. The dynamic spirit of the Guptas was lost. The effort was to cut out their individual fates from the destiny of the race in the vain hope that they could find their heaven in this way. They did not want to share the dishonour of the race, nor to fight and strive for the restoration of its honour, for the whole affair seemed to be very humiliating. The best among them became therefore impractical dreamers while the ordinary

man, oblivious of the critical task, became busy with the stolen pleasures of life.

The Gurus broke this torpor. They came to share the grief and dishonour of the race. The tormented soul of Guru Nanak recorded the woes of his time. His heart was outraged at the shame heaped upon the people and the cruelties perpetrated. The Guru refused to consider woman a hindrance in the spiritual journey. Like ancient rishis, from Guru Nanak onwards, they lived in families. They did not wish to keep the world of woman closed to themselves. They in fact enriched their vision from it. They pleaded for woman's emancipations. They stood for the race's freedom and honour. Guru Tegh Bahadur did everything to persuade Aurangzeb to give her rightful freedom of faith back. Finally, when nothing worked, they took to the steel. They were conscious of the weakness of the race which was a mere sparrow before the enemy who was like a hawk. But sparrows shall fight the Hawks :

"Sure shall I make one dash against a lakh and more,
Then and then alone shall my Mother called me Gobind Singh".

The Indians had been bearing all kinds of suppression of their culture and social virtues. A fallacy had developed among them that to grow indifferent to pain and inhuman tortures is to conquer them spiritually. The Gurus challenged this myth. They realized that what the race had styled as a spiritual reply to atrocities was in fact an attitude of negativity.

The Gurus gave to love the importance that they gave to nothing else. At all other costs this flame is to be kept alive. It is the direct manifestation of God in us. The form of love in a person in fact shows the level of his spiritual attainment. When human love realizes itself to be but a spark of God, its movement and pleasure in transient things starts fading and a deeper interest rises in it to express its source, i.e. God.

The racial habit of passive grief was inhuman with the monstrous situation when the only valuable thing given to men, i.e. love had been extinguished. This adjustment

springs from our unconscious. Whenever love is killed in our life, we willingly accept passive grief as an alternative. It is considered heroic not to weep, not to protest, not to question. Such perverted virtues are the outcome of the racial sin of accepting passively the murder of the divine element in us.

The Gurus said that it was no virtue to hide your face from the plunderer. It was rather carrying his shame in your eyes.

3. Haumey

The Sikh approach is monistic. The procedure is of surrender. The layman surrenders his soul to the Guru. The Guru surrenders his soul to God. The way is of willing subordination to God, i.e. Love or light.

The individual self has the power of God in miniature form. Ignorance plays upon his imperfection. He builds with those powers a small island for himself. This is his Haumey, his Ahamkara. This isolates him from the Lord. Will is the power which can make a windowless monad of him as well as a soldier of Light and Love. Active participation in the Lord is advocated. It is possible through an act of will. Here the Sikh Gurus differ from other teachers in a major way. Surrender to the will of God has been generally understood to be the same as the destruction of personal will or desire. Hence there has been no dearth of saints who have likened desires to serpents who ought to be crushed by one who seeks God. According to psychologists, destruction of desires cannot usher the advent of the Divine will in us. The Gurus have talked of a positive way. You cannot be in communion with the will of God by destroying your individual will. A higher effort and determination are required for this. Your individual will is the only link you have with the Divine will. Instead of destroying your will make it an instrument of God's will. The One has transformed into many not only at the spiritual level, but at all levels. The Gurus seem to be saying, that this transformation is taking place at all time everywhere. Wherever life is, there transformation is. At the levels of thoughts, feelings and will the same One is appearing as many. None can reach the One by destroying the many. The wise ones learn the

spiritual art of rolling back the many into one. To hear the clean call of the One amidst the myriad calls of the many, requires sincere love. It is here, more than any where else that the importance of love is proved. In the clamour and cry of a thousand warring desires, it is love alone which gives you a trace of the divine will. One unawakened by this love is more likely to let pass the Divine will as one of the many wills. He will know that it is the real will, the only will and all other wills are nothing but its vulgarizations, nothing but the change of the real into so many unrels. It requires the power of love to understand his scheme.

But those who do not realize this central theme of all creation, i. e. love, find themselves preys to ego, haumey. These are two alternatives. One who goes for Ahamkara or individuality, has not traced yet the home of the lover. Even at the highest spiritual stage, the Gurus never gave any value to their individuated selves. The last Guru went so far as to curse those who thought of building a memorial to him.

"If I knew Him should I not describe him." (Japji) such is the humility that Guru Nanak practised.

4. The Mystical Sway

In the days of the Gurus, due to a long history of sloth and inertia, mysticism had degenerated into a form of practical escapism. The upanisadic mysticism was beyond intellect. After all intellectual adventures, when the seers found them incapable of revealing the Lord, they used a language which did not convey a definite thing. Later on, after the invasions had sacked the vitality of the race, the cowardly thinkers used mysticism as an escape from reality. The Gurus refused to do so. They banished mysticism from practical life.

C.G. Jung says, "The possession of the mystery cuts one off from intercourse with the rest of mankind." The Gurus neither attained nor aimed at such isolation. They were in constant communion with the people. They broke all barriers between the mystic and the common people. God is not a mystery. No secret or special religious practices were required to invoke Him. We can be in direct communion with Him if we surrender ourselves to Him.

Haumey or ego is the reverse of Hukum, i.e. a will surrendered to God. A true Sikh has to change haumey into Hukum. Though they have not talked in details of their spiritual experiences, yet important hints are available. One who by devotion and surrender to love would exchange haumey for Hukum, will get the divine gift of mystical sway. The Gurus asked their disciples not to stop here, to give no importance to the mystical sway which was no more than a snare. Most of the saints have preferred to stop at this. Patanjali had also warned the yogis not to lay much store by such powers. To value them is the same as to miss the end. There is no magical power or miracle with the Sikh Gurus. Like the finest of the seers, like Mahavir and Buddha, they refused to attract people to religion through miracles. They invoked love itself. For one to be able to do this great penance and self-purification are needed. Like speaks to like.

The Gurus inflamed the spiritual spark in the heart of the Indians. The racial consciousness or life-force, through a long career of self-nagations, had been atrophied. It had reached a stage when the Indian soul was no longer living. The Gurus had realised the danger. For a country with such an enlightened past it was all the more suicidal. In remote past the Indian soul had touched the supreme heights of evolution, had realised its essence. Now all that wisdom was becoming subtle bondage. More impotent than wisdom is the motive behind it. If the motive is of fear or self-withdrawal, wisdom will become a deadly weapon in its hands. In the spiritual language, it becomes a huge merciless serpent which coils round the soul and makes it its own prisoner. The Indian soul has suffered long under this pathetic bondage and too many words are perhaps not required to show what I mean. All our wisdom had been poisoned by a spirit of negation. What should have led the race to higher conquests and fulfilments both here and hereafter, brought only disaster, wastes and pessimism. Why? This was the question that struck Guru Nanak. Why this darkness? Asked Guru Nanak, and his anguished soul cried, "Shall I never come out of it." He faced the problem realistically. There was a fundamental difference between the approach of other contemporary

saints and of the Gurus. The saints talked of escape. Sankaracharya had paved the way for it by his brilliant conception of Maya. Tulsi Das, Ramanuja, Vallabha and all other saints were influenced by this life-negative spirit of Sankaracharya. They all agreed on one point at least that it was possible to build a different world within this tormented world of ours, and instead of lamenting for what man has made of man, a wise man should build his private spiritual world and live in it, establishing a close link with God. The Gurus said, No. Not for me, said Guru Nanak, any private world of self-exaltation. Where the common man suffers, there is my field. The Gurus were the first in the medieval days to make an attempt to win back earth for the children of God. They were realistic enough not to be satisfied with any imaginary or spiritually animated world. They were clear that they had to share the common life and its sufferings. They did not mean to use their spiritual powers to build an ivory tower for themselves. They rejected the notion of private, elevated, capsuled life. They did not bow to the forces of darkness. They did not seek compromises for themselves. Whoever was an enemy of the masses, was the enemy of humanity. This approach naturally brought them face to face before a mighty empire and, as time passed, they had to fortify themselves militarily against its injustices and tyranny. This gave a new shape and concept to the Sikh faith. Originally militaristic activity was not at all envisaged. Guru Nanak lived as an ordinary farmer with his two sons and wife and later on Guru Angad, at that time a disciple, also joined the holy farmer family. Never once the idea to take up arms seems to have struck him.

The Sikh militarism is therefore not an essential part of the creed. It is the turning of philosopher into warriors as a matter of exigency, as a response to their time. Their history records one of the finest dreams, of the awakening of wisdom. Their wars were only expressions of a deeper inner vow of total fearlessness. This is the vow that Guru Nanak took and this is the vow that every Sikh takes to this day. Splendid must have been the sense that led these Gurus to trace the maladies of human soul. In the Mahabharata anger

was discovered by Vyas as the root of sins. But much water had flown down the Indus since Krishna called Arjuna to give a battle to the antihuman. Mephistopheles tells the witches in Faust :

“Much water has flown down the Seine and culture had time enough to reach even the Devil since we met last.”

Instead of anger, fear had come to be the central vice, in the Indian soul. It had become the root of all sins. It had grown and nurtured in a subtle way. The Indians began avoiding square issues and leaving politics to rulers and society to self-acquisitive individuals. This artifice they had contrived in order to keep their peace undisturbed. But peace is not retained in this way. The storm had entered the soul. It could be quietened by leaving those torn by it to themselves. It was a hidden form of cowardice for philosophers to leave the layman with his problems and go for an isolated life. It was the pathos of distance that had entered the soul of the higher ones. When their turn came to give a lead to the erring and confused masses, they stood aside. The dark had broken on a winter night and in cold dark waves millions were struggling. The captains at this time preferred to retire. This was a betrayal. It grew gradually to a deep-seated fear. The Indian people started fearing everything. The rulers they feared. The sadhus, tantriks they feared. They feared even God. They feared to love. They feared to worship openly. To speak the truth was out of the question. In the medieval ages, even those known for their boldness like Kabir, confined themselves to parables. There is not a single treatise composed in medieval days which speaks boldly and factually of the wretched conditions of the people and the atrocities perpetrated on them. Fear had silenced wisdom. There is no history of those days, no autobiography or other record to bring to us a sensitive appraisal of the soul of India. Fear had coiled the soul. The Gurus therefore made courage the cordinal virtue. Fear became the source of all ill. So shall courage become the source of all good—this seems to have been the thinking of the Gurus.

4. Sikh Cosmology

There is not much talk about the cosmos or the situation of the various worlds in Sikh scriptures. It is very rarely that one comes across such allusions. None the less they have described worlds which a true seeker experiences psychologically like the Sach Khand, Dharam Khand, Gyan Khand.

Gyan Khand is the world which a true seeker experiences intellectually. It is full of light. The flames of thought keep it bright. A million brooks of joy are there whose origin cannot be traced. Another trace is given in Japji :

Nirankar, the Lord beyond space and time, resides in Sach Khand.

The source-spring of illuminated action is Karam Khand. A seeker can unfold these hidden worlds within his body.

The Sikh fall in with the age-old Hindu concept of millions of worlds. Thus they have no fear of contradiction from modern science. What that Yogi or Sikh experiences psychologically is the correct clue to this wonderful creation of God. All these worlds are enfolded in the small human frame by the Creator and a seeker unfolds vast stretches of space and time within himself. Thus when the Sixth Guru Har Gobind sits fully armed on the throne in obedience to the wish of his father, Guru Arjan, he realizes within himself the injunctions not only of his father, but of his predecessors as well.

The Sikh discipline lays great emphasis on human virtues. It is not for men to become a God. "Greater than truth is a true man," said Guru Nanak. Human virtues were important. Here arises the need for spiritual discipline. Naama Yoga and meditation as well as self-restraint were preached and practised by the Gurus with the sole objective of letting the soul of man retain its human qualities against all odds. It was their firm belief that for a communion with God and to be able to express the will of Wahiguru, i.e. God, retention of the human virtues was very essential. This emphasis of theirs is of utmost importance, one the full value of which has not been realized so far. In fact, in this single ardour they have managed to retain the best of both the worlds.

The vedantists did not care for this and as a result, to exhibit the divine light which had no form or character, the human soul tended to expand itself to breaking stretch— an effort in which human qualities were lost. The sanyasis had little to offer which was of relevance to human life. In fact human virtues were relegated to the background and a saint was considered to be in no need of them. This error helped in the rise of such dark systems as the kapalikas and Aghories. All the philosophic systems had become averse to human miseries. Instead of taking a human interest in them, the Yogis tendered further to humiliate the layman by telling him that his sufferings were symbols of his sinful life.

The Gurus insisted that the first thing a true Sikh has to ensure is the development of human virtues. Let the soul be first worthy of the body. Then alone will it be worthy of God. The fact that a human body has been given to us is to be justified by moulding the soul in such a way that it grows into human virtues of man. Only such a soul is capable of understanding the message of God.

The Sikh Guru have given a code of conduct to their disciples which must awaken the soul in them. The moment the soul awakens and becomes active, space and time give it the form of a serpent. Every invisible power, when it tries to express itself through matter, gets automatically the form of a snake. It seems to be a universal phenomenon. Look at wind, electricity, sound or any other invisible power. The moment you try to take their imprint on matter, you find they take up serpentine coils. If you watch the wind agitating a river you find the wind gets the form of a serpent. Similarly when science learnt to record sound, it found sound to be of the shape of a serpent again. It seems space and time contrive to clothe the soul with the subtle body of a serpent the moment it wills to express itself in our body. This 'Will' comes to the soul of one in hundreds. But all his dreams get shattered for space and time, as has been their custom, give it immediately subtle body of a serpent. It is called the subtle body, the astral body or the sukshma-sarira. The Sikh faith lays no store by this subtle body. It rather advocates a discipline which empowers the soul to command

space and time to provide a subtle human body instead of a serpentine subtle body. The first step in Sikh discipline is therefore the timing of space and time. The subtle body should be human. The saint in Sikhism should be more human than the ordinary men. Only such a man has known the art of awakening his soul, of making it express itself in the body and yet not to get it tempered by the subtle intermediate body of a serpent. If you get the subtle body of a serpent, all your wisdom and virtue, all your love, act as a serpent. The motive behind the human becomes the serpent. Hence the wrath and curse and flashing eyes and floating hairs of the traditional saints. The Sikh totally disapproves such a conduct. Guru Tegh Bahadur was a Guru because, even in face of enormous cruelty and heartlessness, his soul did not lose its virtues of human patience and calm. His divine origin was illuminating his sorrowful face with the radiance of love. His divinity was in doing away with the subtle body.

Here I would like to infer from the few words of the Gurus their original interpretation of the Kundalini power in man. The Tantriks and medieval Yogis are unanimous on the point that it is the hidden or residual power lying coiled as a serpent in the root of our existence. In the absence of clear philosophic discussions on part of the Gurus, much reliance shall have to be put on logical inferences or deductions, in interpreting their thoughts for the modern reader. Prior to Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra, neither the Upanisads nor the Jaina and Buddhist systems speak of the Kundalini as a serpent-like force. I think when the yogis visualized this enormous power it had already been given the serpent-form by space and time, the two intuitions of the soul. The medieval Yogis saw Kundalini in this degenerated form and standardised it. While reading the intense importance to human virtue given by the Gurus, it struck me as highly significant that they have placed a true life even above Truth. This bold statement gives me sufficient clue to infer that the Gurus never thought that the snake was the inevitable form given to Kundalini. It is rather due to an error and ignorance that Kundalini will take up a

human form. It is this human form that we find in the awakened Kundalini of men like Guru Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Their incessant flow of undying energy at no time is blind or inhuman. It was indeed a miracle. It should be quite confounding to modern evolutionist like Bergson, to see that even the primal life-force, the *elan-vital* in her widest, torrential flood in a human being could be so well measured and moralized.

Energy and the ideal have ever been the two ancient dreams disturbing the eye-lids of man. He had always been moved by them. Sometimes they got energy realized in the personality of a Temur, Chenghis, Atilla or Napoleon. At some other cross-road of history they found the human ideal realized in a Chirst, a Tirthankar or a Buddha. But never the same man wielded weapons and lived a life of a hectic activity and energy without compromising the ideals. I think the type of hero Nietzsche dreamt of in Zarathustrs, had already appeared as Gobind Singh. It is a pity that he never knew of him.

The goal of the Sikh Gurus was not beyond Good and Evil. This philosophic concept had already taken the followers of Sankarcharya to a point from which there was no return. They had broken the human bounds. This ideal ultimately produced Kapaliks and Aghoris and several such systems which laid no emphasis on the purity and essential humanness of our conduct.

The vedic concept was never beyond good and evil. Good has always been the ideal. The difference between a great seer's and an ordinary man's actions is only this that the seer has knowledge of a deeper and more effective good of which the layman is unaware. Even as God does good to us, which we cannot understand, so a great man's actions may not be entirely comprehensible to ordinary man. None the less they are nothing but good. The Vedic seers ever thought that a highly evolved man was exempt from the necessity of adhering to good actions or ethical standards

Actions belong to the world of Asat. Therefore the good and evil actions both are Asat, illusory. Why then be so particular about their distinction? This seems to have

been the argument of the followers of Sankaracarya. This resulted in indifference to political miseries and the common joys and sorrows of life. It also helped in the growth of callousness, cruelty and insensitivity in the social life.

Guru Nanak recorded, on the other hand, in the most sensitive words the miseries and agonies of common man of his time. He suffered the commoner's yoke—a true sign of greatness. No doubt Sikhism also holds only God to be the truth. The world is a multi-coloured show without substance. Actions in such a world are also of the nature and stuff of which the world is made. But, the Guru would say this was no logic for not doing strictly good actions. The task before man was not to live in the world of Maya with detachment. This illusory world has to disappear, has to become a non-entity in the soul of man. This has to be realized as a positive force and not as a mere notion.

The deepest and spontaneous fountains of action in man are not beyond good and evil, but only good. The Divine appears in us as the impetus of good actions alone. Evil is no opposite of good as an impostor is no opposite of a true heir; as a false Guru is no opposite of a true Guru. In fact out of the many tricks of Maya it is one, and a very confounding one to appear as the opposite of God and thus gain the seat of the rival. The Gurus would say there is no rival to Him. Only he is. He is good. Evil is not His opposite. Therefore the idea beyond good and evil is meaningless and misleading. Evil is not the opposite of good but a veil drawn by ignorance, a play enacted for the blinded and those who revel in folly.

The Gurus gave a wild shock to the coiled serpent—the racial genius. They said emphatically that good actions were the sole carriers to Nirvana. It was erroneous to think that they too bind. They are of the very nature of God. God does not bind. They dispelled this age-old philosophic error and awakened the race to its pristine wisdom.

TEACHINGS OF GURU NANAK DEV

**Delivered by
Dr. R. K. Tripathi**

LECTURE I

TEACHINGS OF GURU NANAK DEV (background & general)

I am grateful to the authorities of the Punjabi University Patiala, specially to the Dean Faculty of Religious Studies for inviting me to deliver the Guru Nanak lectures this year. I am aware of the honour they have done me and am also aware that it was not quite wise on my part to accept the invitation. I am anything but a scholar of Sikhism and so to lecture to the scholars of Sikhism in the land of Sikhism on Sikhism would appear to be anything but wise. I have accepted the invitation only as a devotee of Guru Nanak. I thought I would get an opportunity to study Guru Nanak's teaching more closely for the sake of these lectures. So these lectures or the invitation for them has done me good but whether they will do any good to the listeners is more than what I can say. I can only say that I stand before you in all humility and would beg to be excused if I happen to go stray. I am ever willing to learn.

I

Guru Nanak is easily one of the greatest spiritual leaders of the world and that not only of this age but of all ages. It would be arrogant on my part to try to measure his greatness but I must say that it must not be measured by the number of his followers; it is the quality and greatness of his teaching that has to be kept in mind. It should be borne in mind that he was a luminary not of a dark horizon but a luminary among luminaries. There is a certain uniqueness about him. He was born with a plan for the spiritual regeneration of the country, nay, of the world. He gave nine Gurus or shall we say, nine opportunities to the world to listen to him. His successors were as great as he himself, because they were no other than Nanak in another form. There can be no doubt

that he came down deliberately from his spiritual abode for the sake of humanity. Without meaning any offence to the Sikh community I may mention here that there is a tradition that the great saint Janak was born as Guru Nanak. The reason is that Janak had a great desire to preach and propagate the bhakti of the Lord and so he had to come down to us to satisfy his spiritual desire.

The peculiarity of Guru Nanak's religion is that it is the only religion in the world in which the word of the Guru or the Granth is regarded as the embodiment of the Guru Himself. And even about the Granth there is a peculiarity; it contains not only the words of the Gurus but also the words of other great saints and sages. This shows the Gurus' great love of truth, their freedom from pride and partiality, their freedom from sectarianism and narrowness. The acceptance of the Granth as Guru is a remarkable feature of Sikhism. In every religion certain texts are regarded as revealed and sacred, and they serve as the basis of that religion. But in India, greater emphasis is laid on the importance of a living Guru and that for good reasons. Without a living Guru no tradition can survive. A living Guru not only teaches but also assures us that the ideal is something which can be achieved; he inspires and strengthens faith. The Guru adjusts the spiritual teaching to the capacity of the individual even as a medical doctor adjusts his prescription to the system of the patient. He is able to see and remove the individual difficulties of the disciple; he saves him from depression and inflation both. Physical association with the Guru is itself a great asset; it is a way of imbibing his teaching. So the importance of a living Guru is no doubt great.

But a question arises here. If only a living person can be a Guru, what was the idea behind establishing Granth Sahib as Guru? Here I may mention a Vaisnava tradition. In Vaisnavism it is believed that a spiritual text is not a dead and inert thing like an ordinary book; a spiritual text is a living thing. Texts like the Gita and the Ramayana of Tulsi Das are living beings and so they are to be worshipped; in their presence we have to feel the presence of God¹. It is also

1. It is said that Bhakta, Bhāgavat and Bhagavān are one,

reported that these texts sometimes appear as living persons to those who have eyes to see. Therefore we should not be deceived by our physical eyes ; we should not regard the Granth Sahib as a mere book ; it is a power and a person. Texts like Japuji are important not only for their content or ideas ; they have also spiritual power or *mantra shakti* in them. A repetition of Japuji even without understanding it works as a spiritual power.

It seems to me that the Guru as a person has certain disadvantages which the Guru as Granth does not have. Gurus are sometimes approached for worldly gains and for performing miracles. Sometimes people develop personal feelings of jealousy etc. against living Gurus and sometimes people begin to see short-comings in them. It is obvious that all these things cannot happen in the case of the Granth as Guru. The Granth has to be respected not merely because it contains truth but also because it is the word of the Guru. It comes to have power by virtue of being the word of the Guru. So the Granth is both personal and impersonal ; like God it is at once both. In fact, God being the ultimate Guru or *ādi Guru*, all other Gurus may be regarded as an incarnation of God. But let me be cautious here. I once happened to tell a sikh friend of mine that Guru Nanak was an incarnation of God and he turned round and said that like Islam Sikhism does not believe in any incarnation of God. In Christianity also God sends His only begotten Son and does not Himself come down. In this connection I want to say two things. It is understandable if Christianity and Islam do not believe in the incarnation of God, because they are not familiar with doctrine of maya. But Sikhism is familiar with the concept of maya which explains the possibility of Divine Incarnation. There should be no fear that any imperfection will attach to God if He incarnates Himself as man because incarnation is by the power of His maya. Secondly the most important function of God or probably His only function is to save the jivas, and so whosoever saves other jivas is, as Sri Ramakrishna points out, to that extent Isvara. The great saints and

sages are no doubt saviours of humanity and are therefore to be regarded as incarnations of God. In this sense, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Jainism and so also Sikhism may be said to be believers in Divine Incarnation. The Guru was undoubtedly the saviour of humanity and to that extent God Himself.²

What amazes us most in the life of Guru Nanak is his extensive travel. Those days when we did not have the present means of transport, the Guru went to Mecca, to Assam, to Ceylon, to Nepal and to various other places. In this he seems to have gone even beyond Sankaracarya but he did not establish any Matha. Probably he did not want to have any organised religion ; he did not want to have one more sect alongwith already existing numerous sects. Rather he wanted to emphasise the universal and essential elements of all sects. So his religion cannot be regarded as at par with other sects. Jainism and Buddhism also seem to have started with the same spirit. But later, like Buddhism and Jainism, Sikhism also came to have a form and an organisation. The result is that today like Buddhism and Jainism, Sikhism also has come to be regarded as one religion among other religions. I do not know whether it is a gain or a loss. But I do feel that this was not the original spirit of Sikhism. Guru Nanak not only did not want to have a kingdom of his own as Aurangzeb later seems to have suspected; he did not want even to have a sect of his own.³ He wanted to have only classless lovers of God. He criticised both Hindus and Muslims, but when there was the question of protecting the interest of religion against injustice, the Gurus did not mind risking their own lives for that and even sacrificed themselves. Nothing could be a greater proof of the great catholicity and universality of outlook in Sikh Gurus. The Gurus lived and died not for any one sect but for religion itself and for this the whole of humanity must be grateful

2 Sukhmani VII-8. "There is no difference between God and His saints."

3. Macauliffe (p. 179) quotes Guru Nanak as saying 'I reject all sects'.

to them.

All the subsequent Gurus were as great as Guru Nanak himself ; they were all born great. That is why even a child of 5 years and 3 months (Guru Har Krishan) could be a Guru of the same spiritual status as other Gurus. They had all of them the same spirit and the same mission, viz. of establishing true religion. Guruship was not hereditary ; a would-be Guru was properly observed, tested and then selected. Guru Teg Bahadur lived in obscurity without caring to compete with pretenders, but reality could not remain hidden and he was found out by Makkhan Shah in a miraculous way. When the proper time came Guru Teg Bahadur exhibited extraordinary fortitude, fearlessness and courage ; his sacrifice is unparalleled in history. The story of Guru Arjan's suffering due to the torture of Chandu reminds us of Christ. Guru Gobind Singh sacrificed his sons and Guru Har Rai went to the extent of disowning his son Ram Rai for showing miracles and distorting the Granth Sahib in order to please Aurangzeb. Guru Har Krishan though only a child dauntlessly refused to see Aurangzeb in spite of the Emperor's repeated requests. Guru Har Gobind chastised his son who was only of nine years for performing a miracle and the child voluntarily gave up his mortal frame. The history of Sikh Gurus is an extraordinary record of humility, fortitude, courage, fearlessness and the spirit of service and sacrifice. No other religion can boast of having a continuous line of ten wonderful Gurus.

II

We have said above that Guru Nanak came down to us to preach and propagate the bhakti of God. We want to emphasise this point because we find that a confusion between bhakti mārga and jñāna mārga stands as an obstacle in appraising and appreciating the teachings of the saints of bhakti mārga. I would like to translate bhakti mārga as religion and jñāna mārga as philosophy, and would like to draw a distinction between the two though I am aware that philosophy and religion are not regarded as distinct in India. But the two mārgās are certainly distinguished and it will be helpful to bear their differences in mind.

Let us take Advaita Vedānta as typical philosophy representing jñāna mārga. We notice here certain very important features. To begin with, philosophy is not meant for all as it requires a certain fitness. It is meant only for a proper *adhikari* who has virtues like renunciation, awareness of the distinction between the eternal and the non-eternal, a controlled and disciplined mind and an intense desire for liberation. It is not enough merely to have intellectual calibre and academic scholarship or even a moral character. The aspirant must have earnestness, seriousness and receptivity born of the awareness of worldly life as suffering; there must be a kind of disillusionment about worldly pursuits. It is rare and difficult to have the above qualities and so jñāna mārga is meant for very few persons. It is a difficult path.⁴ When there is disillusionment or disenchantment about worldly values, there is a crisis in our life and there necessarily arises a question . can the world of reality on which worldly life depends be real ? Value and reality are closely related. What is taken to be good depends on what we take to be real. Do we not seek worldly gains because we take this body and everything associated with the body as real or rather as our real self ? Our system of values is necessarily related to our view of reality. Consider the gains and losses of dreams as compared to the gains and losses of waking life. Our view of reality in general and of our self in particular determines our outlook and perspective. And yet our whole life depends on an unconscious, unexamined and natural belief about our self as body, and not on an examined view of the self. Our life is based on *adhyāsa* or an ignorant and unconscious confusion between the self and the not-self. Philosophy as critical reflection draws our attention to this confusion and points out the paramount importance of the enquiry (*jijnāsā*) about the true nature of the self as all evil is traceable to our misconception about the self, a misconception which gives rise to the ego or *ahankāra*. That *ahankāra* is at the root of all evil is a great spiritual discovery. Ordinarily we relate

4. Tulsi Das has very well drawn attention to this point in Uttarkand Upanisad (Katha 1, 3, 14) *Ksurasyadhārā nisitā duratyayā*.

all our pleasures and pains to circumstances or environment, but the spiritual man does not do so; he holds himself, his ego or his karma as the cause of everything in his life, and so instead of improving his external conditions, he tries to improve himself. This is what is called turning from the *bahirmukhi* attitude to *antarmukhi* attitude, a charge from *prayrtti* to *nivrtti*.

It would thus appear that philosophy is from the very initial stages critical; it does not dogmatically accept either our natural beliefs about reality or the values based on those beliefs. Verily philosophy is a kind of revolution in life based on spiritual awakening. In philosophical enquiry there is an implicit faith that with the discovery of the true nature of reality, specially of the self, all our problems will go or that knowledge of truth is the only remedy. In this way there is of necessity a distinction made between a superficial view and a critical view or between the apparent and the real. The apparent is that which is negated by knowledge; it is negated by knowledge because it is due to ignorance. Only when the apparent is taken to be due to ignorance that it can be negated by knowledge and not otherwise; knowledge is opposed only to ignorance and not to any reality. So in order to explain the apparent, the nature of ignorance as the cause of the apparent has to be explained. Advaitism holds that ignorance is not mere absence of knowledge, because where there is ignorance there is wrong belief. So ignorance does not merely hide the real; it also puts up or projects the apparent or the unreal. And though ignorance does all this, it is not anything in itself as it is necessarily dependent on *cit* (consciousness) and is necessarily destroyed by knowledge. If this view of ignorance is not admitted then neither the emergence of the apparent nor its negation by knowledge can be explained. So philosophy has to be *māyāvādi* or *avidyāvādi*. But two things must be noted. Firstly, the negation of the apparent does not mean that the apparent is necessarily destroyed or that it disappears, but only that our belief in its reality is withdrawn though it may continue to appear as it happens in the case of our reflection in the

mirror which appears but is taken to be false. Secondly, the falsity of the apparent can be realised only when the real is known and not before. Not until Brahman is known, we have the right to call the world false; it is real until Brahman is known. So long as our body and its associates are taken to be real, the world also is real. Only when Brahman is known as real that the world can be regarded as false.

III

Now let us consider the nature of religion or bhakti mārga. It seems to us that bhakti begins with faith in or consciousness of a supreme power: bhakti is always bhakti of power, at least to begin with. In religious consciousness God appears first as a power which means that religious consciousness is necessarily related to our consciousness of powerlessness. It is not that when ever there is the consciousness of powerlessness or helplessness, there is religious consciousness. But if religious consciousness is there, the consciousness of helplessness also must be there. As to how religious consciousness arises is more than what we can say. Probably it is due to our past samskaras. It may be due to our association with holy men,⁵ or it may arise because of our experience of something miraculous. The wind bloweth where it listeth. But it is certain that there can be no beginning of bhakti without an awareness of or faith in a supreme power. It is the power of the Lord that is most attractive to the bhakta as he finds himself finite and helpless⁶. To begin with, it may be awareness of helplessness regarding worldly affairs but later there is the realisation of helplessness regarding liberation or regarding freedom from sin and ignorance. So there are different stages of bhakti. There is first of all the stage of the *ārta*. A man is in tight corners and finds that nothing or no body can be of any avail; his hands automatically go up in prayer to the supreme. Then there is the stage of *arthārthi*. A man

5. See Sukhmani—Ashtpadi VII.

6. This is why miracles as demonstrating power have a place in religion but not in jñāna-mārga or philosophy.

needs something and finds that he cannot get it by any means; he looks up to the Lord for help. In the case of these two types of bhaktas, two features must be noted. Firstly there is the experiential realisation (and not merely intellectual belief) of one's utter helplessness. So long as there is the slightest belief in self-power or the ego, the Lord would not listen. This is because help to an egoistic man only strengthens his ego and the Lord would not be a party to such a transaction, since He knows that doing real good to a man means helping him in getting rid of the ego and not strengthening it. God listens to us only when the ego is not there, at least temporarily. Secondly though both the above kinds of bhaktas are interested in something worldly and not in something spiritual, yet they are bhaktas because instead of depending on worldly means they depend on God. Once a man is linked up with God and is in His gravitational zone, he is slowly weaned away from worldly desires and he begins to enjoy the glory of God; he begins to love God not merely as a means to some end but as an end in itself. This is how a bhakta develops *vairagya* or freedom from the desire for enjoyment or self-gratification. He then has single-minded devotion to God when he does not have egoistic tendencies. This is the highest stage of bhakti as there is the experience of real joy in the love of God.

Certain features of religion or bhaktimārga may now be noted. First of all, in this path there is no need of *vairagya* as a prerequisite from the very beginning as it is in *jñāna mārga*. That is why bhakti is said to be easier than *jñāna*. While bhakti is along our natural urges (*pravṛtti*) *jñāna* is an uphill course. In the former there is a transformation while in the latter there is a renunciation of our natural urges. In religion the attitude is not that of critical reflection and rejection but of accepting an additional reality called God. As the reality of God enters our life even when our mind is full of worldly desires, it is natural that we accept the reality of God along with the reality of the world without noticing any incompatibility between the two. But slowly when we come to realise that worldly pursuits only hamper our ego and the ego comes in the way of our love for God, we feel that we

cannot have both God and the world at the same time ; the love for the temporal must yield to the love for the eternal. Any way, in religion *vairāgya* comes later and not at the very beginning. Because of the persistence of the worldly desires along with God-consciousness, our attitude to God in religion is personal. We take God and ourselves both as person, and we expect favours from God. It is only a person and not an impersonal being who can understand our difficulties, can listen to our prayers and can show grace to help us. So we may summarise and say that the religious attitude is characterised by an initial acceptance of the world as real, the realisation of one's utter helplessness, the awareness of or faith in a supreme power called God, and faith in His Grace.

Now comparing philosophy and religion, we may say that both accept the importance of a Guru and the necessity of faith ; both regard the ego as the source of all evil and both accept a supreme spiritual goal of life. But their approaches are different. While philosophy is from the very beginning critical and reflective, religion is receptive and affirmative with the result that while philosophy is necessarily committed to a theory of ignorance, religion is not. Philosophy is idealistic and religion is realistic. In Philosophy the ego is removed by the true knowledge of the self ; in religion it is removed by devotion to God as the only power. In philosophy knowledge is not only necessary but also sufficient ; in religion knowledge is necessary but not sufficient. In Philosophy faith culminates in intuitive experience, in religion it develops into pure bhakti. In Philosophy the attitude is impersonal, but in religion it is personal. In philosophy initially there must be freedom from *bhoktritvābhimāna* (*vairāgya*) and this is followed by freedom from *Kartritvābhimāna*. In religion, there is first of all loss of faith in one's own power (*Kartritvābhimāna*) and that is followed by loss of *bhoktritvābhimāna* or the desire to enjoy. Not my will but thy will is the motto of religion. So religious thought is governed by the logic of love and devotion and not by intellectual logic which governs philosophy.

IV

If we bear the above distinctions in mind it will be easier

for us to understand the teachings of Guru Nanak specially some of the paradoxes found in his teachings. One paradox is about the conception of God. The Guru regards God as formless so much so that he decried not only idol-worship but also perhaps the doctrine of *avatār*. But at the same time he regards God also a person who listens to our prayers comes to our rescue, who judges our actions and gives rewards and punishment. So the question is : how are we to reconcile the view that God is formless with the view that God is a person or has a form ? The view that God is both with a form and without a form being contradictory cannot be acceptable to intellectual logic. But the logic of bhakti is different; bhakti or love is blind as it does not swear try abstract logic. Religion since it is based on faith and devotion and not on critical reflection can accept anything, even a contradiction. It may take the view that seeing contradiction is a defect of our minds ; so one is asked to get rid of mental hurdles in order to have faith. What is necessary is to accept God and to take refuge in Him and not to have a clear understanding of everything from the very beginning. If and when God chooses and finds it necessary, He will reveal everything. How can man, understand mysteries of God by his finite mind ? This is how religious men would argue.

Then there is the question of the relation between our self and God. It is admitted that the self is a *cit* entity like God but at the same time it is also held that our souls are different and distinct from God. It does not bother the religious man to enquire how there can be a plurality of *cit* entities, how the *cit* can be divided and diversified without taking into consideration the *acit* as associated with the *cit*. The religious man asserts his realism and says that we see a plurality of souls and living beings and we find differences not only between one soul and another but also between God and finite souls, and there is an end of the matter. Souls are in bondage, subject to birth and death or to the law of Karma and they cannot redeem themselves. God is infinite, free from any bondage and the Lord of the universe, doing everything, and moving everything. It is this distinction that requires and sustains our dependence on God and so it must

be real. How can there be the relation of refuge and the refugee, the servant and the Master, the lover and the beloved, the redeemer and the redeemed unless we accept the distinction between man and God ?⁷ Here the religion seems to be not only realistic but also pragmatic. Whatever is necessary for faith and devotion must be regarded as true; and if our reason fails to understand this, so much the worse for reason and not for faith.

The most difficult problem that puzzles the interpreters of Guru Nanak is the problem concerning *Māyā*. There is no doubt that the Guru uses this term quite often saying that the world is the Lord's *maya*, that we are deluded by His *māyā* and that the Lord alone can control His *māyā*. But at the same time it is also true that Guru Nanak speaks of the world and the creatures of the world real and not as illusory. He says, "the whole visible creation is Thy Body, whatever we hear is Thy voice. Thou thyself pervadest all and art the enjoyer."⁸ The Sikh Scholars are vehement in protesting against the view that the world is illusory according to Sikhism. They hold that all that the Guru taught was the unity and equality of all men and not the unreality of the world. This is so in the case of all religions.

Here our view is that Guru Nanak taught and also did not teach the doctrine of *māyā*. There is an epistemological or philosophic approach to this doctrine and there is also an axiological approach. According to the former, *māyā* is *sadasad vilaksana* or different from both real and unreal like the rope-snake. It is not that *māyā* is a third something; it is different from real as it is negated by knowledge and is different from unreal as it appears while the unreal sky-flower does not even appear. It is wholly epistemic and is discovered by critical reflection as the source of the illusory, because illusory can be due neither to the real nor due to the unreal and it is nothing independent. So in the epistemological

7. Sometimes the Guru says that God is Himself the worshipper and also the worshipped.—Macauliffe, p. 254.

Also Sukhmani VIII-8 (He who knoweth God is himself the formless one.)

8. See also Sukhmani XVI, 6.

approach the emphasis is on the denial of the ontological status of the apparent. This is because it is found that belief in the value of something depends on its reality; the moment something is found to be unreal, its value also goes like the value of a false coin. Hence belief in the reality or unreality of a thing is basic in our life.

According to the other view what is emphasised is not the reality or unreality of an object but the fact that the value of the object is not worth our efforts because it is finite, temporary and relative. And not only that. The finite and the temporary values have another evil; our love for them turns us away from God who is infinite and eternal. We cannot love God and mammon both at the same time; the mind can be occupied by one only at a time; Love of the infinite and the eternal is contradictory to the love of the finite and the temporal. Love of the temporal involves us in *Samsara*, in the cycle of birth and death; it strengthens our love of the ego and distracts us from God. In the transitional stages when we have love for God and the world both, God is used as a means as by the *art* and *artharthi* bhaktas. This is not true love. When the pull of God becomes strong, there is the weakening of interest in worldly pursuits. When the mind is purged of worldliness, there arises true and pure love and then worldly values appear as snares or *māyā*, as something deceptive. This is the religious man's attitude to *māyā* or the world though here also the world is sometimes said to be a mere dream.

From the above it would appear that Guru Nanak did regard the world as *māyā* though not so much in the epistemological sense as in the axiological sense since his approach was religious and not philosophical⁹. *Māyā* means being lured-away by personal relations, personal possessions and personal gratification. All religious men take the same view. This does not mean that they hate the world or humanity. They teach love of humanity and of all beings but not personal or egoistic attachment to anyone. Love should

9. Sometimes the Guru calls the world a dream.—Macauliffe p. 276.
See also Japuji 30.

not be on the basis of mine and thine but on the basis that God is present in every being. Whatever stands in the way of our love for God should be shunned. Tulsi Das goes to the extent of saying that those who do not love God should be treated as enemies. Mohammad's opposition to qafirs or non-believers seems to be of the same kind. Guru Nanak himself found it difficult to live in the family at a certain stage though he was a married man had children also. A break from the world is necessary to the extent the world obstructs our way to God; the break does not mean indifference but detachment. The Gurus lived in the world and even fought against oppression and injustice but with complete detachment ; they wanted us also to live like that.

So far as the constructive side of the Guru's teaching is concerned we have to maintain the above perspective if only to avoid misunderstanding and confusion. We should not look for a system of philosophy in their teaching. Their's was the path of faith and devotion and not of critical reflection and speculation. They preached salvation not by knowledge but by love and devotion. We should seek in their teaching only what is concerned with bhakti. This is why Guru Nanak though he used the language of the common folk like Buddha, communicated through music and poetry and not through prose. Buddhism is more of a philosophy than of religion in the sense explained above ; it was critical and reflective rather than devotional and affirmative. Sikhism is more of a religion than a philosophy. And in religion where the feeling of devotion is to be aroused, the best medium is poetry and music as they touch the heart directly. Even Sankara turned to poetry when he was devotional. In all devotional religions, poetry and music find an important place, much more so in Sikhism. The poets succeed in infusing the devotional spirit much more than any preaching in prose. Buddhism and Jainism as they lack the devotional spirit have failed to inspire the best kind of music and poetry. But wherever Guru Nanak went, he was able to charm people by his devotional music ; he created an atmosphere wherever he went.

We will consider the positive teaching of the Gurus in

the second lecture. There was however a negative side of the Guru's teaching which may be considered here. It is well known that Guru Nanak vehemently criticised Hindus, Muslims, Yogis, etc. who pretended to be religious who put on the religious robe and who practised religious rituals, but were really far from religion proper. The Guru went out of his way to different religious centres where he could meet people who seemed to be misguided and whom he wanted to correct. There was lot of opposition to the Guru then and even today, some people are critical of the Guru because of that. It is said that the Guru should have propounded his own teaching but should not have bitterly criticised others. It is, therefore, necessary to understand his criticism properly and to have the correct perspective.

First of all we should remember that the Guru did not have any malice or bitterness against any body. He criticised only certain practices of the so-called religious men as they did not seem to be sincere and honest. He did not criticise any religion as such. He had an intense love for everybody and so he had a kind of heart-ache when he saw that people had forgotten the essence of religion and were deceiving themselves and others by assuming a religious appearance. He felt that the true religious spirit of man would emerge when they were enlightened regarding the essence of religion; there were at least some who were really hungry for true religion. This is why the Guru was able to win followers where ever he went to preach. So it was sheer love for men that prompted him to remove their ignorance by criticising those who were misguiding people. We may also put it differently. It was Guru's love of true religion that prompted him to be critical. He loved men, but he loved religion more and he did not mind offending people, if they felt offended, for the sake of truth. Nor was he afraid of any opposition. All the Gurus exhibited the same spirit of fearlessness and love of truth.

Some people misunderstood the Guru and felt that he was criticising religion itself but he corrected them and pointed out that he was criticising only their hypocrisy and insincerity and not religion which means true love of God.

Some people thought that the Guru was demolishing the distinction between Hindus and Muslims and was therefore harming both. But the Guru pointed out that in true religion there was no distinction of caste and community, that religion does not divide but unites and that it is not healthy to overemphasise the external forms. All differences refer to the body but religion is concerned with souls and God; neither the soul nor God is a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian. The God of one religion is not different from the God of another religion and the soul of one man is not different from that of another; only our egos are different and not the souls. To the extent every religion teaches the love of God, all religions are one. Guru Nanak wanted to draw attention to this universal element in religion. He wanted to show that religion is not the monopoly of any particular community nor did it mean adherence to a particular form or to a particular prophet of God. Guru Nanak's criticism was like that of Buddha motivated by the desire to make people practise religion in the right spirit emphasising the essentials and not the external forms. Too much adherence to form leads to hypocrisy and fanaticism. Guru Nanak wanted man to be directly related to God without the mediation of any creedal or communal belief or authority, something which Luther seems to have done in his own religion. But while Luther wanted to reform only Christian, Guru Nanak wanted all religion to shed off the external forms and to be inspired by the essential spirit.

From what has been said above, we must not hasten to the conclusion that in religion form has no importance. Every religion must have a form and does have a form. Form is necessary for the identity of a religion, for its perpetuation and also for understanding its spirit. Like the symbol the form serves a useful purpose only so long as it is taken to be just form as distinct from content, and not when it is mistaken to be the content itself. When the form is overemphasised, the content gets neglected and there is bigotry, fanaticism and superstition, and above all there is a failure to see that in essentials all spiritual religions are one. It is in this spirit of emphasising the essential and

universal aspect of religion that Guru Nanak raised his voice against external forms to which both Hindus and Muslims were rigidly sticking. It was necessary to shake them and to draw their attention to the essential core of religion. Not that Guru Nanak wanted to eliminate all forms, because he knew the importance of form also. Like Buddhism, Sikhism initially protested against forms but later itself came to have a form, because no religion can be there without a form.

The other point which is worth remembering is that Guru Nanak's criticism was from the religious standpoint and in the interest of religion. It was not like the criticism of religion by a politician or a philosopher or a social reformer; it was criticism of religion from within and not criticism of religion from outside; it was self-criticism of religion as it were. This kind of criticism by religious men has a whole some effect and is inevitable when religion loses its spirit. It has happened many times in the history of different religions. Criticism of religion from outside has a destructive effect, but self-criticism of religion is wholesome and invigorating. Guru Nanak criticised neither Hinduism nor Islam, but he did criticise the Hindus and Muslims for their wrong practices. Sometimes people wonder whether the Guru was a Hindu or a Muslim or whether he was a synthesiser of the two. Guru Nanak did not like to be known as belonging to a certain sect. But it seems to us that he accepted most of the Hindu principles. He accepted the Hindu view of God and creation; he accepted even Onkar as the name or symbol of God. He accepted also the Hindu doctrine of Karma and rebirth and regarded the soul as eternal and uncreated. All this is not accepted in Islam. But he seems to agree with Islam in holding that there is no incarnation of God; like Islam he criticises idol-worship and like Islam he accepts the brotherhood of man. But I must hasten to point out the brotherhood of man as conceived by Guru Nanak is different from that found in Islam. All men are brothers for him not because they are all created by God but in sense that all souls are alike spiritual and in all of them there is a presence of God equally. This idea of the

immanence of God is not found in Islam except, of course, in some Sufi saints. It is this view of the brotherhood of man that inspired Guru Nanak's criticism of the caste system. The criticism is from the religious point of view and not from the social point of view. The Guru's point of view was always spiritual.

A possible objection may be noted here. There are certain elements in the teaching of Guru Nanak which are not universally accepted by all religions and so his religion can not be called universal religion. For example, it may be said that the doctrine of Karma and the associated doctrine of rebirth are not accepted by Islam and¹ Christianity. Here it should be noted that the basic doctrine is the doctrine or law of Karma. Every one has to reap the fruits of his good and bad Karmas under the moral governance of the Lord. In this sense the law of Karma is accepted by all religions; all religions insist on good conduct and warn us against the possibility of suffering as a consequence of evil conduct. From the law of Karma Hinduism draws a further corollary and points out that rebirth is necessary, as all the Karmas of the past cannot be exhaustively liquidated in the present life itself. Those Karmas that have not yet borne fruit necessarily need another life. In fact, it is the possibility of another life that is bondage, and it is because of this that the spiritual problem is accentuated. If there were only this life the problem would not be so serious. So the Guru accepted the doctrine of rebirth but at the same time he warned us that man should not lose the opportunity of realising God, because he may not be born as man again. We must not be slack and complacent about our spiritual effort, because it is by rare good fortune that one is born as a man, one does not know when one would get this chance again. One must not fail to avail this opportunity; one must be earnest about one's spiritual goal. In other words, although the Guru agreed that there is rebirth, the next birth need not necessarily be birth as a man again, and so for all practical purposes we may take it as our last birth and should do all we can to attain the spiritual destiny which is our due.

In this lecture, we have tried to indicate the general nature of our approach to Guru Nanak's teaching or Sikhism. In the next one we propose to consider the important teachings of Guru Nanak.

Lecture II

TEACHINGS OF GURU NANAK DEV (PHILOSOPHICAL AND DOCTRINAL)

We have said that Guru Nanak was a religious man and not a philosopher or jnanamargi. Nonetheless every religion has a certain philosophic background and so it is necessary to have a clear idea of the theism of Guru Nanak specially because it is different from theism as understood in the west. God according to Guru Nanak as also according to other theists is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. He is almighty, eternal, infinite and all goodness; there is none comparable to Him, none equal to Him and none greater than Him. He is beyond thought and speech¹⁰. Being the Lord and the Master of the Universe, He is the controller and director of the world¹¹. But He does it according to a system, law which is His own and not anything from outside. The system operating in the universe is the law of Karma, a law which is above the laws of nature, a law which connects man and all living beings to nature and also to each other. Our birth and death and all we have in this life is due to our Karmas (Hukume andar sab koi baher hukum na koi). So God is not an arbitrary creator as is held by some theists; His creation is according to his own law or the law of Karma (Nanak likhia nāl) But it is not only this law that works in the universe; God being the author of the law is above the law and can and does have a direct hand in the process of the universe. He can even set aside the law of Karma if and when He chooses though ordinarily He does not do so. So God as the person is supreme and not the law. But God is not only a person; He is also formless. This is a point not

10. Sochai Sochi na hovai je sochee lakhavar. Japuji, 1.

11. Hukumi Hukum chalai rahu. Japuji, 3.

accepted by some other theists who like to conceive God only as a person. God is not only formless but free from all distinctions; He is neither male nor female; He is neither a Hindu nor a Christian nor a Musalmān; He is the God of all equally. He is equally¹² good and kind to all and helps all in attaining the supreme goal of life. He is both immanent and transcendent; He resides in the heart of everyone. The latter is not accepted by western theist.

II

Certain questions arise here. If God is kind and also above the law, why does He make us subject to the law of Karma which means so much suffering to us? This is as good as asking why is there creation at all? If it were not necessary for us to have the fruits of our Karma, there would have been no need of creation, because, as already noted, creation is not an arbitrary act of God. If creation were not according to the law of Karma, it would be arbitrary. And if creation were arbitrary, how could we explain differences and diversities in the fortunes of God's creatures? Can we say that God is kind and good to some and unkind to others? That would be preposterous. All pleasure and pain, everything good and evil, all diversity, every thing is due to our Karma¹³ and not due to the arbitrariness of God; we do not have to blame God for differences. In Christianity and Islam God is held responsible for everything since the law of Karma as conceived in India is not accepted there. The result is that the problem of evil becomes insoluble there. This is not so in Indian theism. God is just and works according to a law; He is neither partial nor cruel nor arbitrary.

It may be asked, why does God's kindness not overrule His justice? It may be pointed out here that justice and kindness are not opposed to each other; justice itself is kindness and is for our good. The law of Karma is not a mechanical way of awarding the fruits of our Karma; it may be so in Jainism, Buddhism and Mimāṃsā but not in Hindu theism. God is the director of the law of Karma and He so

12. Gita, IX-29.

11. Japji, 29, (Lekhe āvai bhāg.)

directs and plans the process of Karmas and their fruits that the whole process expedites and ends in our spiritual evolution. We learn certain lessons in this process. First of All we learn that suffering is due to sinful Karmas. Secondly, we learn that sinful Karmas are due to our over preoccupation with the desire for self-gratification. Thirdly, we learn that even if we do virtuous Karmas alone, we cannot go beyond birth and death. Finally, we are not the real doers; God is the only and the real doer of everything.

It is obvious then that the law of Karma is a spiritual law and not merely a moral law. It works like this. We do Karmas and even had Karmas because we believe that we are the doers and that we can get what we want i.e. happiness by doing Karmas. But a time comes when we realise that we cannot get rid of suffering or birth and death by Karmas or self-effort, that Karmas involve us more and more in the world, that we are helpless. All this cannot happen except by going through the process of Karma. This is the great importance of this law. Through its operation God wants us to realise that Kartaship is due to our wrong belief that we are the body while really we are Atma or spirit, that we are the really akin to God who is the mover of the whole world. So Karma and consequent suffering open our eyes and we see our helplessness. In this sense the law of Karma is not punitive but remedial. Karmas do not bear fruit at random; there is a direction given by God. God so plans the process that every jiva may take minimum time to come to realise his true nature and his relation to God. Is this not the kindness of God ?

We must also remember that even in the process of the liquidation of our Karmas God does not leave us to ourselves and then goes to sleep. No, He is all the time watching us and comes directly to our help when He finds an opportune moment. This direct help from God comes under four conditions. Firstly, when we are an *ārtā*; secondly, when we are *arīhārthi*. Thirdly, God is pleased and comes to our help when we accept His dispensations cheerfully¹⁴ and not

14. Nanak hukumai je bujhai ta haumai kahai na koi.
Also, Hukum rajai chalana. Japuji, 2, 1.

grudgingly. Finally, when we surrender ourselves wholly to God, He looks after both our worldly as well as spiritual well being. It may be noticed that in all above four conditions, the essential feature is freedom from the ego. In the words of Guru Nanak, we may say that so long as the *houme* or the ego is strong, the Lord allows the law of Karma to operate, but the moment the ego shows signs of being subdued and the jiva looks upto God, the Lord works as a person, shows His grace, begins to take direct interest and lifts the jiva. The law of Karma is therefore part of a divine plan to bring every jiva round to God-consciousness which is the supreme purpose of God in creation and there is no contradiction in God being both a person and a system.

There is yet another question concerning the law of Karma. Does the acceptance of the law of Karma mean the acceptance of complete determinism? This is a complete misunderstanding of the law of Karma which is found in some westerners. The law of Karma does not mean that we are not free to act. It is only, the sub-human beings who are deprived of this freedom; they belong to bhoga-yoni but not man. If this freedom to do new Karmas were not there, then after some times all our Karmas would get exhausted and we would become automatically free. But this does not happen, because while enjoying the fruits of our past Karmas we go on adding new Karmas to our stock. So the freedom to act, to turn a new leaf is always there, but some people because of their old samskāras have greater freedom to be virtuous while others do not have it.¹⁵ In fact full and real freedom comes when one is free from pride or *haume*. Our acts are determined by our samskāras which form the ego. So no man is completely determined. What is determined in our life is what we get and not what we do; we can get in this life only what we have earned in the past. So the saints and sages say that we cannot get more in this life by making greater effort; we can get only what is there in our Karma¹⁶. Our

15. Sir Daljit Singh *Guru Nanak*, p. 140 Under Divine providence, our freedom is like that of the fish in the river; it moves freely but is carried to the sea by the river.

16. Japuji, 29

present Karmas bear fruit only in future life. Let us therefore exert ourselves for spiritual gains¹⁷ and not for material gains which we are going to get in any case.

It is necessary to discuss one more problem concerning Guru Nanak's conception of God. If God is a person, how can He be formless? This is a difficult question. We may leave it either as a mystery or we may try to understand it. We may recall that other saints also have taken the same view. Tulsi Das, for example says, "Agunahi Sagunahi nahi kachhu bhedā." There is no difference between saguna and nirguna. We should remember that the form of God is not something imposed on Him from outside; it is not something which can limit or bind Him. This is because God assumes the form of a person of His own sweet will; the form does not stick to Him rigidly as it does in the case of ignorant jivās. He can shake off the form any moment He chooses. So really He is formless but He assumes form for the sake of His bhaktās¹⁸. Here Guru Nanak's teaching comes very near the Advaitic view and we feel that the Advaitic approach would introduce greater coherence and consistency in our understanding of Guru Nanak's teaching. It would also bring out the difference between Guru Nanak's conception of God and that of Islam and Christianity. Firstly, Guru Nanak's theism is not anthropomorphic as God is formless. Secondly, God does not reside in Heaven; He is every where and in every one's heart. Finally, God is not an absolute creator in the sense that according to Guru Nanak our souls are eternal and not created by God. It is only human beings that are created by God and not their souls. Our souls are nothing but Divine sparks. Undoubtedly there is a pantheistic tendency in Sikhism as it is in Advaitism.¹⁹

Here we are led to another controversial and difficult question and that is regarding the nature of the soul and its relation to God. Are the souls essentially one with God or

17. Macauliffe, p. 253. Vol. I "O my soul, why proposest thou exertion, when God Himself is engaged in effort for thee".

18. Tulsi Das—Bhagat hetu Bhagavan Prabhu,
Ram Dhareu tanu bhupa.

19. Macauliffe Vol. I, L—LXIII.

distinct from Him ? Please note that the question is about souls and not about jivās. Theists all over the world like to believe that our souls are distinct and that they cannot be one with God even after *nirvāṇa* or mukti. Some Sikh scholars also seem to think like that. But to us it seems that Guru Nanak was not a theist of the ordinary type as is obvious from His conception of God. He belonged to the class of mystic saints like Kabir and Sufis whose verses have been incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Nanak has clearly and repeatedly said that the bhakta becomes one with God or that the light merges in light.²⁰ He says also that duality or difference is due to egoity (haume) or ignorance. Jivās are different from God but not the souls. So after attaining God there can be no duality as there is no ego. Those who think that the admission of ultimate unity of God and soul would not permit the possibility of morality, love and devotion seem to be mistaken. This unity is ultimate and not empirical and though it is eternally true and real, it is as good as not there so long as there is pride and ignorance. Morality, love and devotion are not only possible but even necessary so long as the ego is there. Unity of man and God comes up as a reality only when and not before the ego has disappeared. In other words, realisation of unity is there only when there is no need of morality or devotion, i.e. when the goal is attained. So the fact of ultimate unity does not stand in the way of the empirical ego or the jivā taking to morality, love and devotion. The ego is useful and necessary if it is used for self-annihilation i.e. for love and service, but not if it is used for self-gratification.

III

Having given the philosophic background of the Guru's teaching, we may now turn to his teaching concerning the path. The goal of life is to attain God-realisation and so the question is how to attain the goal ? Obviously there must be first of all an intense desire to attain that goal. An intense desire for God realisation must be naturally and necessarily

20. Macauliffe, Vol. I, p. 254, also p. 272 and Japuji, 32.

followed by the desire to have a Guru. We have already considered the importance of the Guru in spiritual life. Guru Nanak has emphasised any number of times that there is nothing doing without a Guru.²¹ But one must have a true Guru and not merely a formal Guru. It is the Guru who reveals the secret of spiritual path; he gives light and he gives protection. However, it may be asked how to get a true Guru? The answer is simple. Pray to God who is looking after the spiritual needs of every one of us and who therefore cannot fail to supply a Guru if and when there is a genuine desire. We are told that a poor blind beggar at Mathura had a dream that Guru Nanak would come and give him light. The Guru went to Mathura and made the poor blind man the first Sikh at Mathura. So God sends the Guru to a seeker wherever he may be. Really speaking the Guru seeks the disciple more than the disciple seeks the Guru, because the Guru can recognise a true disciple better than a disciple can recognise a true Guru. So one has to develop a strong urge and the rest is arranged by God. This kind of faith is initially of paramount importance. If one does not get a Guru there must be some defect²² or lack of faith in the seeker, and it is not because God is indifferent. One cannot get a Guru if one has the pride that one deserves a Guru; there must be humility; there must be faith in and dependence on God. To have a Guru means having the spirit of obedience; only he who has this spirit can be a real Sikh. One who remains a *manmukh* and not a *Gurumukh* even after having a Guru is not a Sikh. The spirit of obedience means surrendering even one's own view of right and wrong; whatever the Guru says is right.²³ Even if one does something immoral, one does not suffer if it is done in obedience to the Guru. In society, four persons are to be obeyed—the father, the mother, the husband and the Guru. But obedience to Guru is above all because the Guru is God Himself. Even if the Guru is not of a high status,

21. Japuji, 5, 6, 15.

22. Sir Daljit Singh, *Guru Nanak*, p. 117.

23. Macauliffe Vol. I, p. 54.

obedience to Him is spiritually good. What matters is the spirit of unconditional and loyal obedience, because that curbs our ego which is the most important thing in religious life. Obedience means utter surrender which is possible only when one is free from self-will. The capacity to obey ungrudgingly, nay, cheerfully, comes only when one is free from all consideration for any thing worldly, i.e. only when one is convinced that he is a soul and not the body. Obedience means merging or desiring to merge oneself in the life of the Guru, and that is as good as attaining the spiritual goal. Hence the importance of obedience is very great. Tulsi Das says that there is no greater service to the Lord than obedience, cheerful obedience includes in itself shrādhā, service, surrender and shānti.

IV

The desire to get a Guru is in a way part of sādhanā and yet real sādhanā begins after one has got the shelter of a Guru. The Guru takes the whole responsibility and gives the sacred name, the sacred name is not merely a name but something charged with spiritual power which starts working in the subsoils of the disciple's mind as he goes on reciting the name. Guru Nanak did not attach much importance to the do's and don't's regarding food, bath, etc. But he did emphasise the importance of *amritvelā*²⁴ or the early hours of the morning for the recitation or japa of God's name. All the great saints have done so. Japa or remembrance of God's name is important in all spiritual disciplines but more so in bhakti-mārga. Tulsi Das is not tired of singing the praises of the name and goes to the extent of saying that the name of the Lord is even greater than the Lord. How are we to link ourselves up with invisible God? It is with the help of the name that we get connected with God. At the empirical level we make a distinction between the name and the named and the name does not serve the purpose of the thing named. But even at the empirical level yogis can know all about a man if his name is mentioned. This shows the close connection of the name and the named. This is more

24. Japuji, 4.

so in the case of God; the name and the named are one here as the name of God is as powerful as God Himself. Moreover, we cannot know a thing or recognise a thing even if it is before us without knowing its name. The name is our light as it were; it is like the stick of a blind man. The name is the rope by which we climb up; it is the water by which we wash our sins and purify ourselves²⁵. It is the fire which turns the dross and converts us into gold. God is one but has infinite names and no name at the same time. In fact, some people believe that all names are God's names; God is the source of all *sabad* or word. Probably to avoid sectarianism, the Guru chose *Ik Onkara* as the supreme name of the Lord. The three letters *Onkara* (a, u, m) remind us of God as creator, sustainer and destroyer.

We can understand the significance of the name in another way. An ailing man having acute pain shouts "Father, O Father, Mother, O Mother." Similarly when we realise our helplessness and experience the misery of worldly life, there is a spontaneous cry from our heart and we call God by uttering His name. Remembering the name means the realisation that none can cure the disease of worldliness except God. While pleasure binds us more and more to the world, suffering awakens us to God (*Dukha daru sukha roga bhaya*). The desire to seek pleasure is the disease and is rooted in our ego. To utter the name of God is to forget the ego; it is kind of prayer indicating the relaxation of the hold of the ego on us. The lesser the hold of the ego the greater will be our joy in uttering the name. In the *bhaktimārga*, a stage comes when the name begins to yield more joy than anything of the world can do. This is when *jivā* comes to realise that he is pure spirit and belongs to none else but God. Worldly men fail to understand this because of the predominance of the ego, but even they cannot resist the impact when they are in the presence of a holy man like the Guru, the ego howsoever powerful must yield to God. Just as the holy man reminds us that we are

25. Japuji, 20. (Bhariye mati papa ke sanga, Ohu dhopai navai ke rangā.)

spirit and not the body, so also the name reminds us of our status as spiritual beings and our relation to God. Verily, nama-japa is nothing but living in the presence of God.

V

Nama-japa is meaningless if it does not affect our conduct. The point is that when our face is turned towards God a revolution occurs in life. God-consciousness is a dynamic thing and affects our whole life; one cannot remain what one was before God-consciousness; our whole conduct is completely changed and it must be so. We cannot believe in God and at the same time remain indifferent to God or to ourselves. We cannot commit sin, we cannot be unkind and cruel, we cannot be selfish and self-seeking. If, however, such a revolution does not take place in our life, it follows either that our belief is weak and superficial or that our sinful samskārās are very strong²⁶. In either case the remedy is greater and greater remembrance of God and then eventually our conduct will change. The point is that belief in God must affect our conduct; it must make us moral and virtuous. That is why when Guru Nanak visited religious places and found that the so-called religious men were immoral and unkind to their brethren, he pointed out to them that they were not real believers as their conduct was inconsistent with belief in God. In the transitional stage there may be, no doubt, lapses now and then, but if the aspirant is found to be sincerely struggling against evil and temptation, God observes this and helps the aspirant. But if even the sincere struggle also is not there, then there is nothing but insincerity and hypocrisy. So even if our conduct is not the ideal type, there should be at least the effort and the earnestness to overcome evil and to be good and to do good²⁷. As spiritual life is a matter of inner growth, what matters is not so much our success as our earnestness and sincerity; no body can excuse himself for lack of sincerity which is the minimum we can have. But at the same time, one has to be cautious against the show of religious-

26. Gita, VII, 28.

27. Japuji, 21. (Binu guna keete bhagati na hoi.)

sity. Where there is the desire to show and to impress others, there is pride or lack of humility and where there is pride there is no such thing as real spirituality. So in all our efforts, there should be not only sincerity but also humility, without humility there can be no real receptivity in our hearts and without receptivity there can be obviously no gain. God would not come to our rescue in the absence of humility; the Guru cannot help if there is lack of humility. If God and Guru help an egoistic man, he will feel inflated and not grateful to God and Guru; his ego will go on growing. Naturally, therefore, God and Guru; who want us to be free from our ego cannot do anything which goes to encourage and strengthen our ego. The egoistic man is therefore his own enemy; he depends on his finite strength and does not tap the source of infinite strength, God. It is, therefore, useless to blame others. If we have to blame, let us blame ourselves, our ego.

Sincerity and humility but not only that. The believer in God is always hopeful and hence cheerful.²⁸ When God is on our side, what is there to worry? Moreover, our ego is strengthened not only by our feeling of elation but also by our feeling of depression. It is the ego that feels depressed when it is frustrated. So we have to be cautious against both elation and depression; we have to maintain a poise neither leaning to the one nor to the other side of the ego.²⁹ This is possible only if there is firm faith in the power and goodness of God. The Guru has emphasised again and again that everything happens by the will of God and is good in spite of appearances to the contrary. It is because we take the standpoint of our ego that we see good and evil in the world. From the spiritual point of view or God's point of view, there is only goodness.³⁰ Seeing goodness alone is a kind of advaitism found in the bhaktimārga. The more we love God the more we see His goodness in the world. This

28. Japuji, 8,9 (Nanak bhagata sada vigāsu)

29. Macauliffe Vol. I, p. 270.

30. The Guru says, 'What pleases thee is good.' Japuji, 17.

is the sign of love. Of course, this goodness is not worldly but spiritual; even suffering can be good from the spiritual point of view, and even pleasure can be evil³¹ God is *mangal maya*. How can there be any evil in His creation? It is only because of ignorance or lack of faith and devotion that we see evil in the world.

VI

The Guru's greatest emphasis was on service. The spirit of service is the the most potent force to conquer the ego. Really speaking when the ego is strong, we cannot serve any one; we serve only ourselves. So the greater the ego the greater the need of its anti-dote, service. The peculiar feature of service is that everything that we call our own is involved in this-our body, our mind, our possessions, our time and our energy. Service affects our whole personality and life, and makes for an all round improvement, everything is purified by the touch of the spirit of service. If our ego is erratic and arrogant let it be yoked in service; it will be tamed and trained. The greater the spirit of service, the lesser the ego; they are in inverse ratio. Whether a man practises other disciplines or not, he must not be slack about, doing service; it does good to both, the server and the served.

But it is not the external act of service but the spirit behind it that is important. From that point of view service is of different grades or orders. Serving one's own kith and kin does not take us beyond the pale of the ego. Real service begins when it is rendered to the whole society or rather to the whole of humanity irrespective of any consideration of mine and thine; it is rendered not only to men but to all creatures of the Lord. But even service of this kind can be only moral and not spiritual. By the service of moral kind, the ego is no doubt purified but is not eliminated; the feeling that I do all this remains there. Service in the spiritual sense is done when we see God in every one and serve the Lord present in every one. This kind of service is spiritual and not merely moral as it links us up with God. And if it

31. 'Dukha daru sukha roga bhayā.' Asa Ki war, XII.

is *niskāma* and not *sākama*, it is purely spiritual. Even *niskāma* service has grades. The service rendered with the resources which we consider to be our own is lower than the service in which our feeling is that we are serving God with what is God's. There is a still higher order of service in which we serve men not with material resources but with spiritual wisdom. This is what the great saints and sages do and they are the greatest servants of man and God. The Sikh Gurus are most outstanding in this regard.

VII

In our treatment of the path, prayer ought to have been in the first place, but we are considering it at the end as it is related to the question of grace. In the *bhakti* path prayer is of primary importance because it is with prayer that *bhakti* begins whether prayer to God or to Guru. No body, not even a child can say that he does not know what prayer is. This is because prayer is born of a felt or a keenly felt need or desire, and there is none who does not have this experience. But desire leads to prayer only when it is accompanied with the feeling of helplessness or with the feeling of needing help. To begin with our prayers are *sākama* since *bhakti* does not presuppose *vairagya* as *jñāna* does. According to their faith people pray to different gods and goddesses for the fulfillment of their desires. But prayer is really spiritual when it is *niskāma* and is offered to God in the spirit of helplessness. *Sākama* prayer also has its importance but *niskāma* prayer is truly spiritual. Really speaking there is a contradiction implicit in *sākama* prayer. We pray to God for something worldly while God wants to make us free from worldliness. What should God do under such circumstances? He does grant sometimes such prayers also when He feels that it will encourage the *sādhaka* in spiritual life but not otherwise. There is yet another curious situation. The robber prays that he should be successful in his robbery and the person robbed prays that his property should be safe. Whose prayer is to be granted? Sometimes it appears that the robber's prayer is heard. But really speaking it is the law of karma that operates ordinarily. The Lord intervenes directly only when He is sure that the granting of the prayer

would stimulate the spiritual progress of the man who prays. Even an immoral prayer may be granted if in God's judgment the granting of the prayer helps the man spiritually. Otherwise, whosoever may be, it may not be granted; our successes and failures with moral or immoral are ordinarily governed by the law of karma though we sometimes make the mistake of attributing them to God's kindness or unkindness. If success makes us feel humble and God-conscious, then we may be justified in thinking that God has directly come to our help, but not otherwise. God listens to *ārtas* and *arthārthis* and even takes our whole responsibility³² on Himself when we have surrendered ourselves wholly to Him.

Our prayers are generally occasional or at fixed times only; these are mechanical and not spontaneous and heartfelt. But a real conviction about our helplessness would mean that there should be constant, spontaneous and heartfelt prayer. When belief in God is not only in the conscious layer of our mind but enters the subsoils of our mind, there arises prayer from our very depth and goes on even in dream and sleep. When prayer is of this kind, it is powerful. It purifies us and moves God. Really speaking until faith enters our unconscious mind it cannot be sufficiently dynamic. Some of us accept God at the level of the conscious mind but the unconscious mind goes the other way. It is only when God is accepted by the conscious and unconscious mind both that there is harmony and peace. When our conscious faith is sufficiently earnest and serious it enters the unconscious mind also. Just as sex-thoughts enter the unconscious mind, because there is intense emotion behind them, so also the thought of God can enter the unconscious mind and can purify it. *Sādhana* or spiritual discipline ought to establish a unity between the conscious and unconscious mind and ought to integrate the two; they ought to be in complete concordance and harmony and not in tension.

One or two other questions regarding prayer may be discussed. Firstly, is prayer not an imposition of our own

32. 'Deda de laide thaki pahi'. Japuji, 3.

will on God ? If so, is it not against the spirit of *bhakti* ? Yes, *sākama* prayers are no doubt a way of imposing our own will on God and so they are not approved by religious saints. But even regarding *sākama* prayers God makes a concession if one is an *ārta* or an *arthārthi*, that is, if God finds that the spirit of *bhakti* is coming up and that it will grow if the prayer is granted. *Niskāma* prayers are really spiritual as they are one with the will of God; there is no question of imposition regarding them. The other interesting question that arises about prayer is this : is prayer a kind of self-effort ? Sometimes prayers are made for earning merit as it were, so that when there seems to be no response from God there is frustration. But really speaking this is not the true spirit of prayer. To regard prayer as a kind of self-effort is, it seems to us, a kind of self-contradiction, because prayer is born out of the feeling of helplessness. So prayer cannot be regarded as a kind of self-effort; it is rather a way of expressing and confessing one's helplessness, and it is then that it moves God. When God grants our prayer He does it as a matter of grace and not as a reward for our merit or self-effort. Whatever we get in spiritual life is a gift of God or His grace.

VIII

But if everything is by the Grace of God, it may be asked what is the use of *sādhana* ? Though every thing is by the Grace of God, *sādhana* has its purpose and importance. *Sādhana* is useless if it is done in the spirit of strengthening one's claim on God. But if it is done for the sake of cleansing the mind, for making it receptive, for deepening the spirit of humility and for deepening God-consciousness then it is useful. *Sādhana* may be regarded as the barometer of our spiritual consciousness; the greater our earnestness the greater and intenser will be our *sādhana*. Progress in spiritual life is to be measured not by what we are able to get, but by the amount and quality of *sādhana* we are able to do. To put it differently, what matters is the *sādhana*-spirit and not any success. We may even say that the ability to do maximum *sādhana*, say *nama-japa*, is itself a success; in fact

the strength to carry out sādhanā is itself by the Grace of God,³³ and it comes when there is humility and not the arrogance that sādhanā will mechanically bring about the result. God is not under any law except His own. If spiritual success were the result of any self-effort, it would naturally produce pride and egoity which is the very negation of spirituality. So it has to be admitted that all success in spiritual life is by the grace of God and yet sādhanā is necessary. We may even go further and say that sādhanā makes us realise the futility of self-effort. This important lesson of realising the futility of self-effort can be learnt only after making vigorous self-effort. From the bhakti point of view the capacity for self-effort is given to us by God only to enable us to see for ourselves that self-effort is useless and that we are helpless. God is pleased to see us realise our helplessness and our nothingness leading to devotion. Even jñāna mārga and yoga mārga where self-effort is said to be of primary importance, the value of the grace of the Guru is recognised. To that extent the bhakti spirit is necessary there also. But the place of grace is much greater in the bhakti-mārga because bhakti is primarily the feeling of dependence.

Sometimes grace is taken to be a kind of favour in the sense of partiality. But is God partial? Certainly not, God is impartial and equally good to all. But the way He does good to different people is different in each case. It is because of our ignorance and pride that God seems to be partial. The Grace of God is working everywhere and always equally but there comes a time in our spiritual evolution when we need the direct help and favour of God. It is not that we *deserve* grace, because that would be a contradiction; we stand in need of God and His Grace but that need must be spiritual. Partiality is found where there is like and dislike or the feeling of mine and thine, but in the case of God, there is no such thing. Everyone is His and He loves all. Even punishment and suffering are part of His Grace as they have a spiritual meaning. God is good to all, equally

33. Asa Ki wār, *Pauri*, XV

and always.

The goal of bhakti is really speaking bhakti itself. If bhakti is for something else, it would be bhakti or love for that thing and not for God. Real bhakti for God cannot consider any thing as superior to bhakti. There is a sense in which we can say that a bhakta does not pray; he is so one with God. But if he does pray it is by way of thanks-giving or expressing his joy or by way of singing the glory of God. Though bhakti is an end in itself, certain results do follow when there is bhakti; they are changes in the life and personality of the bhakta. The bhakta comes to see unity everywhere; apart from the unity of man, and man and the unity of God and man, he sees also that there is only one power operating in the universe and there is only one good (the spiritual) towards which God is making every one go in His own way. The bhakta does not see the duality of God and evil; he sees only goodness in the world. This vision on the one hand integrates man's personality and on the other hand it integrates him with the rest of the world. He is free from all tension and conflict, free from fear, free from jealousy and free from such lower passions as Kāma, Krodha and Lobha. In one word, he is free from egoity (haume);³⁴ he is a saint, he is in the world but not of the world. He loves others, serves others and respects others and expects nothing in return. He is at peace with himself, with others and with God. In this sense a saint is a great asset to the world. Not only that he does not join the competitive life of the worldly people which is a source of misery to every one, but also that by his life and teaching, he is able to help others in controlling their ego, their *kāma*, *krodha* and *lobha*, so that the world becomes a more habitable place. Verily the saints are pillars of strength to the society. The greater the hold of religion or the saints on society, the greater the peace in society. It is therefore a step in the right direction to do all we can do to learn and to propagate the teachings of *Mahā-puras* like Guru Nanak. The day the society comes to accept the teachings of Guru Nanak whole-heartedly, that day all illusions about religion will go and that day will be really a blessed day. Victory to Guru Nanak.

34. 'Apu gavaie ta sahu paiye aur kaisi caturai', M.I, 722.